# MOMMIE DEAREST

A Screenplay

by

Robert Getchell

Based on the book

MOMMIE DEAREST

by

Christina Crawford

FIRST DRAFT

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FADE IN:

EXT. JOAN CRAWFORD'S ESTATE - DAY

We are in the huge back yard of a house in Brentwood. Everything is beautiful: sunshine, giant shade trees, ornate bird baths, long rows of roses in bloom -- we are at a children's birthday party. FROM A DISTANCE, we SEE a group of fifteen three-year-olds, the girls in frilly party dresses and the boys in short-pant suits and ties. We HEAR calliope MUSIC as we WATCH the children clustered around a man dressed in a clown suit, who holds a small monkey on a leash. The monkey does a backwards somersault and then climbs up on the man's shoulder as the children shriek and clap their hands.

One child walks a few feet away from the group. She is CHRISTINA CRAWFORD, a pretty child with ice-blonde hair. She glances around, looking for someone; then her face lights up, she smiles and begins to run TOWARD the CAMERA, her arms outstretched. As she runs TOWARD US...

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE, SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT ANGLE, TWO YEARS LATER

The calliope MUSIC is LOUDER. CHRISTINA, now FIVE, is CLOSER to the CAMERA, and, though we can't hear her, we can SEE that her lips are moving. She is saying two words over and over. Behind her, around her, the birthday party has grown incredibly: thirty or forty children mill about, some riding ponies, some watching a magician pull multi-colored doves from his hat. As the five-year old Christina runs TOWARD US...

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE, SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT ANGLE, FOUR YEARS LATER

CHRISTINA, now NINE, is CLOSER to the CAMERA. Behind her, the scene is changed again, and the change is even more incredible: the back yard is filled with children and their mothers or governesses. Fifty eight-to-ten year olds are at the party. They ride on a full-size merry-go-round, from which comes the calliope MUSIC we've heard, or watch two jugglers dressed as gypsies, or stand enthralled before a giant twenty-foot Punch and Judy show, or watch three young women twirling batons. Christina's face is joyous as she nears the someone just to the right of the CAMERA'S POV.

When Christina is ten or twelve feet away from the CAMERA, JOAN CRAWFORD ENTERS the FRAME. She is laughing, her face incandescent. She goes down on one knee to meet Christina, and the two embrace.

CONTINUED:

As they do this, Christina whispers into her mother's ear -- whispers the two words she's been saying over and over as she ran. As she whispers them, the same two words fill the entire screen from edge to edge, so that we HEAR and SEE them at the same instant: the words are MOMMIE DEAREST.

CUT TO:

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY

CREDITS BEGIN AS:

The CAMERA MOVES AROUND a large room banked with flowers. Various mourners converse with each other in low voices. UNDER this, we HEAR recorded organ MUSIC and a woman's muffled, intermittent SOBS. The room is crowded, but the CAMERA THREADS its way through the press of people, ENDING ON the casket containing the body of Joan Crawford. We SEE her body only for a moment -- just long enough TO ESTABLISH who it is.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - DIFFERENT ANGLE

A woman enters, and the crowd parts as if by magic to make her a path. Looking neither left nor right, she moves toward the casket. As she walks, we SEE her clearly; she is the adult CHRISTINA CRAWFORD. Now in her thirties, she is prettier than she was as a child; her hair has darkened to the color of wheat, and her features are intelligent and kind. DAVID KOONTZ, her husband, has entered the room at the same time, but he stays by the door.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - DIFFERENT ANGLE

FROM one side of the casket, the CAMERA WATCHES as Christina reaches the other, open side. The room is silent as she looks down at her mother. Then, without changing expression, her features still smooth, tears well up and roll down her face.

CHRISTINA
(soft; compassionate;
just for her mother)
Did you win, Mommie? Did you beat
the world?

A woman in her late fifties approaches Christina and touches her arm in sympathy. She is ADA WHITE, a fan of Joan's for thirty years. She knows Christina well.

CONTINUED:

ADA
I'm so sorry, Christina.

CHRISTINA
(vague; distracted)
I know.

ADA
It's odd seeing her so still like this. She had more life than anyone I ever knew.

CHRISTINA
(as above)
I know.

ADA
I told her once, I said, 'Joan, being around you's like standing under a waterfall.'
(a beat)
You know what I mean?

CHRISTINA
(she focuses; a small, rueful smile)
Hell, yes, I know. I know better than anyone.

The two women smile and turn to hug each other, then look back into the casket.

ADA
(sighing)
You're right, you're right. She was hell on wheels sometimes, but she could always turn me whichever way she wanted.
(a beat)
And God, was she beautiful. I remember back -- when would that have been, thirty-seven? Thirty-eight? -- When I first knew her, before you were adopted. Those eyes of hers. Everywhere she...

As Ada's voice gradually diminishes...

CREDITS END, AND...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. AN EXPENSIVE LIVING ROOM - 1938 - DAY

Joan Crawford stands by the ornately carved mantle of a huge fireplace, looking at some out of camera range.

JOAN
We aren't good for each other, any more, Raymond. I *have* tried, but over the past few years, I've ... well, I've done things I'm not particularly proud of -- I admit it.
(she crosses to a table, takes a cigarette from a silver box and lights it)
Indiscretions have become a way of life for me.
(a beat; she stares into space, close to tears)
If only you could have known me when I was twenty. I was so open then, so...

Shockingly, out of nowhere, Joan throws back her head and roars with laughter, Then, from O.S. we HEAR a VOICE call "Cut," and we...

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - ANOTHER, WIDER ANGLE

FROM this ANGLE we SEE that Joan is on a sound stage, shooting a movie. The DIRECTOR moves toward her, trying for patience.

DIRECTOR
Joan...

JOAN
(still laughing)
Jes*us*, do you believe this?
(mocking the line and her delivery of it outrageously)
'Indiscretions have become a way of life for me.'
(still amused)
Who the hell wrote that line, anyway? Who the hell thinks any human being ever said a line like that?

CONTINUED:

DIRECTOR
We can make it better. I'll cut away from you when...

JOAN
Let me eat something first. Maybe I can face that line on a full stomach.

The Director glances at his watch, perplexed. Obviously he wants to continue. Joan smiles and touches his face.

JOAN
(continuing)
Come on, darling. It's close enough to twelve thirty. Give us all a present -- a measly little fifteen minutes.

A few stage hands call "Right," and "Yeah, Joan!" The man gives in.

DIRECTOR
All right, all right.
(in a loud voice,
to all)
Back at one thirty, please!

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - DIFFERENT ANGLE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Most of the crew and actors are gone. The Director stands by himself, holding an open script in front of him. Joan walks up to him.

JOAN
It's a piece of crap, isn't it, Joe?

DIRECTOR
We've both done worse.

JOAN
And we've both done better. I prefer better.

DIRECTOR
(trying hard)
We can fix it. I figure if we rewrite the ending and throw out the whole nightclub sequence, it'll be better.

CONTINUED:

JOAN
(soft voice)
Come here and I'll tell you a little secret, Joe.

Puzzled, the Director leans toward her.

JOAN
(continuing;
as above)
The secret is this: you tie a pink ribbon around a pile of crap, it's still a pile of crap.

CUT TO:

INT. LADIES' ROOM - METRO LOT - DAY

The room is small, with only a lavatory and a single stall. Joan enters, dressed as she was in the previous scene, and stands for a moment, her fact expressionless. Then, in an instant, a total transformation takes place; her face contorts with rage. She puts both hands on the door of the stall and slams it shut as hard as she can. In the small room, it makes an unearthly NOISE. Then she does it again. And again. And again. All the while, she doesn't say a word. Scary as hell.

QUICK CUT TO:

EXT. METRO LOT - THE NEXT DAY

Joan and PAUL ELLMAN, a studio executive, are walking through the blazing sunshine. Her posture is beautifully erect, and she walks at such a brisk pace that the man occasionally falls half a foot behind her.

JOAN
I want the last half rewritten, Paul.

PAUL
(horrified)
What?

JOAN
(a bit louder;
enunciating very
clearly)
I say, I-want-the-last-half-rewritten-Paul.

CONTINUED:

PAUL
Look, Joan, we're behind schedule, anyway, and...

JOAN
I want it.

PAUL
I just don't think I can push it through.

JOAN
I want it.

PAUL
I'm afraid I'm going to have to say no, Joan. We've got thirty nine pictures shooting or ready to go, and yours is just one. I wish I could...

Joan stops dead, bringing the man to a sudden halt.

JOAN
(strong, strong)
I _want_ it!

PAUL
(taken aback)
Well, I uh... I suppose...
(he gives up)
Oh, hell, I can pull one of the writers off the...

Joan sees that she's got him, and gives the man a brilliant smile -- a real one. Then, slowly, she kisses the inside tip of her thumb and touches the man's mouth with it -- in effect, transferring the kiss to him.

JOAN
Ask me who's the best.

PAUL
(he responds to her charm in spite of himself)
Who's the best?

JOAN
You are.

As she walks away, she calls back over her shoulder.

CONTINUED:

JOAN
(continuing)
I've always said it -- the absolute best!

She turns a corner and is out of Paul Ellman's line of vision. Instantly she claps her hands together once, very hard. If possible, she walks even straighter than before. There is nothing ugly about her attitude -- she's simply a woman who is happy in victory.

JOAN
(continuing;
claps her hands
together again;
to herself, joyous)
I won. Ah, keep 'em dancing, Joan.

CUT TO:

EXT. M.G.M. GATES - LATER THE SAME DAY

As Joan drives her car off of the lot, some twenty fans spot her. Among them, we ESTABLISH the YOUNG ADA WHITE, the woman who spoke with Christina in the funeral scene. In one voice, the fans make a long "Oh-h-h" sound. It isn't the high shrieking sound that fans are supposed to make. It is the sound of love. They rush to the car, pleading for autographs and snapshots. Joan parks at the side of the street and gets out, signing autographs and graciously smiling for photographs.

Almost too graciously. It isn't that her attitude is false -- just that it is so different from what we've just seen. Her voice lowers slightly, and her diction sounds as if she was to the manor born. For her fans, she is being what they want: the rather grand movie star -- friendly and kind, but definitely a movie star.

As Joan turns from one fan to another, she spots Ada.

JOAN
(she knows the answer
to her question)
Ada, dear, not again! What do you do with all my autographs, trade them?

ADA
(dazzled)
No, no. I save them. I have them all, every one.

JOAN
That's so sweet.

CONTINUED:

Some of the others, as soon as they have their autographs, return to the gate to watch for other stars. Ada, though doesn't move. Her eyes follow Joan's smallest movement.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Joan, with her escort on the right, is seated at a large table with eight or ten other people. The talk is loud and lively, competing with the MUSIC. Suddenly Joan notices a very tall MAN leave the dance floor and walk back to a neighboring table, his date on his arm. Though he is not at all traditionally good looking, he is attractive and masculine. Joan watches him carefully, then turns to an older man on her left and whispers to him. As Joan whispers, the older man's eyes move toward the other table; he nods slightly.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

The attractive Man from the other table moves to stand just behind Joan, who doesn't seem to notice him. When he finally leans forward and speaks, he is smooth and intelligent.

MAN
Excuse me, Miss Crawford, my name's Brian Barry. I hope I'm not intruding, but the music is very good tonight, and I thought you might like to dance.

Joan displays just the right amount of surprise, just the exact touch of minor confusion. Even though we've seen her set up the whole thing, it is hard to believe she's not surprised. She glances toward her escort, who smiles and says "Of course," and she moves to the dance floor with the tall Man.

They dance a discreet distance apart, but it is clear that they are attracted to each other.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - SLIGHTLY LATER

JOAN
(not what's on her mind)
The music _is_ good tonight.

CONTINUED:

BRIAN
(not what's on his mind)
Very.

Ever-so-slightly, they dance closer than before. Both are aroused.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - SLIGHTLY LATER

BRIAN
(not what's on his mind)
And the weather's great, too.

JOAN
(not what's on her mind)
I know. I told my date I'd meet him here, just so I could drive over with the top down.

His arm slowly slips a bit further around her waist. One finger of her left hand moves so that it touches the skin above his collar.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - SLIGHTLY LATER

The dance number is about to end, when Brian stops dancing and draws back from Joan, looking directly at her for the first time since they started dancing. A huge grin spreads over his face as he gives up the chit-chat.

BRIAN
How fast can you get out of here and meet me at the front door?

JOAN
(her smile as big as his; doesn't miss a beat)
Thirty seconds.

BRIAN
What about your purse?

JOAN
I'll leave it.

CONTINUED:

BRIAN
What about your car?

JOAN
I'll leave it.

BRIAN
What about your date?

JOAN
I'll leave it!

BRIAN
(walking away)
Thirty seconds.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

From different directions, the two run toward each other, then head for the parking lot, laughing and looking back over their shoulders guiltily.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CRAWFORD HOME - NIGHT

As Brian's car pulls into the driveway we SEE the Crawford house, partially illuminated by floodlights; what we can SEE of it is large and impressive.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAWFORD HOUSE - NIGHT

The CAMERA FOLLOWS Joan and Brian as they enter and move through the entrance hall and into the living room. The house is lavishly furnished in the style of the late thirties. Brian heads toward a sofa, naturally enough, intending to sit down. Joan doesn't say a word, but starts up a large stairway toward the upstairs bedrooms. Brian's face says, "Oh, I get it," and he follows her.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Brian enters, Joan has already kicked off her shoes and is pulling off her earrings.

CONTINUED:

BRIAN
No preliminaries, huh? You like to get right to the main event.

Joan turns to him. Her words are partially an offer, partially an order, and totally sexy.

JOAN
Why don't you come over here, Brian, and put your mouth on mine.

He moves to stand in front of her. Then, without touching her with his hands, he leans down and kisses her -- only their mouths are connected. The kiss is a serious one, though, and very sensual. Then Joan's arms go around his neck and he pulls her toward him. The kiss grows busier.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

The two have made love, and are lying in bed. Both look relaxed and pleased with themselves.

BRIAN
That was terrific.

JOAN
(just a contented sound)
M-n.

BRIAN
Did you have a good time?

JOAN
(giving him what he wants)
You're the best.

BRIAN
Yeah, yeah.
(a beat)
You do this often?

JOAN
(as above)
No.

BRIAN
Is that true?

JOAN
Sure.

CONTINUED:

BRIAN
(after a pause)
You lying?

JOAN
(through a small
yawn)
Yes.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - LATER

Dressed in a robe, Joan stands by the door. Brian drops a folded piece of paper into a large, three-foot vase standing by the door.

BRIAN
My telephone number. You'll have
it when you need it.

Joan doesn't answer, but simply kisses him lightly and ushers him out. After the door is closed she smiles slightly.

JOAN
(to herself)
You weren't the best, Brian, honey,
but you did just fine.

She tightens the belt of her robe and, her posture still perfect at 2:00 A.M., moves to the living room.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joan fixes herself a drink and lights a cigarette. Then she moves to a record player and, using particular care, takes out a 78-speed record that is kept apart from her other records. Handling it delicately, she puts it on the machine, and the MUSIC STARTS; the song is "My Wonderful One," a wildly romantic number from the twenties, played in a dance-band arrangement. She stands for a moment, listening to the words of the song.

FEMALE SINGER'S VOICE
'My wonderful one,
How my arms long to hold you,
To cuddle and fold you to me.
Just you, only you, in the silvery
moonlight,
In shadowy twilight...'

CONTINUED:

Joan smiles. Then the CAMERA FOLLOWS her as she moves from room to room, turning on lights and taking pleasure in her beautiful house. Humming the song, sometimes singing half a line here or there, she touches a velvet chair in one room, straightens a lamp shade in another. As she moves through the house, everything about her -- her face, her body, her humming -- expresses one thing; her life is good.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

We SEE a frontal SHOT of the huge house. Most of the lights are on, and we can HEAR, faintly, Joan's singing.

JOAN (V.O.)
(low; contented)
'... wonderful, wonderful one...'

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S EXERCISE ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Dressed in dancer's leotards, Joan is exercising, but it is not the kind of exercising housewives do today while watching the Jack La Lanne program; this is work. Joan is bathed in sweat. She holds small, two-and-a-half pound weights in each hand, and is doing bending exercises to keep her waist trim.

Then she lies down, puts her hands over her head and, still holding one of the weights in her hands begins to do sit ups.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S DRESSING ROOM AT METRO - DAY

MIKE LEVEE, Joan's agent, is with her, and just now he has his hands full. She ranges around the room, furious, holding a piece of paper.

JOAN
Oh, that bastard, that rotten bastard.
(she waves the paper)
He wants me to take a salary cut? Thirteen years I've dragged my ass into this studio and shined up every stinking script they threw at me -- and the pictures all made money till this year.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOAN (CONT'D)
Oh, that dirty rotten bastard.
(a beat)
Christ, what I wouldn't give for one good part.
(she sits down, quieter)
I'm not signing this, and you can march back up to his office and tell him so.

Immediately, though, she stands up again, and moves to the door.

JOAN
(continuing)
I'll tell him.

She opens the door, leans out, and yells full-voice, though there's no chance he can hear her.

JOAN
(continuing)
Hey, Louis B. Mayer, you can rot in hell before I sign this!
(she closes the door; normal voice)
I mean it, Mike. I won't sign it.

CUT TO:

EXT. METRO LOT - DAY

Mike is leading Joan toward the parking lot.

MIKE
... That box office poison article hurt you, honey, just...

JOAN
(over-riding him)
You know I'm not box office...

MIKE
(over-riding her)
... just like it did Dietrich and Hepburn.

JOAN
My pictures all made money.

CONTINUED:

MIKE
Always till this year.

JOAN
One year! One bad year out of thirteen and they want me to take a cut?

MIKE
Hell, yes, they do. Hell, yes. You know this place. Hollywood's a whore. You got what it wants, Hollywood'll spread its legs for you in a minute. Slip up, though -- have one bad year -- and it keeps its legs crossed re-e-eal tight.

tired and a little [illegible]

CUT TO:

INT. A RESTAURANT - EARLY EVENING

The restaurant is dim; plates of food sit almost untouched in front of Joan and Mike. They have been drinking, and both are looser, their gestures broader.

JOAN
I'm not signing it.

MIKE
Look at me, Joan.

JOAN
(she's not)
I'm looking at you.

MIKE
(gentle)
Hey.

She looks up.

MIKE
(continuing)
You ever had a better agent?

Joan shakes her head "no."

MIKE
(continuing)
Then trust me -- it's Mayer's last offer. He won't go any higher.

CONTINUED:

JOAN
(won't give up)
I can turn this whole thing around. Just get me a good part. One good part, one good part, one good...

CUT TO:

INT. A BAR - NIGHT

It is late and the place is half empty. Joan and Mike sit in a corner, away from the other patrons. Though they are not drunk, both of them are still drinking. Mike glances at his watch.

MIKE
I've got to get home.
(a beat; he shrugs, signals for two more drinks)
Well, I don't have to get home. Do you have to get home?

JOAN
(out of nowhere; reflective)
When I first came to Hollywood I lived in a rooming house -- a boarding house -- you know? Those places where you have a room to sleep in and everybody eats together? There was this old woman in the room next to mine. She was sick or something, and every night she used to cry and yell, 'Come and get me, Sara, my legs hurt me. Tell Granddad to come and get me.'
(her thoughts run together; almost stream of consciousness)
The studios were like stud farms back then.
(a stray thought)
I only had one blouse to my name. A blue one.
(back to her point)
If somebody at the studio pointed at you and said, 'Hey, you, come here.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOAN
Let's go lay on the floor of my office for fifteen minutes,' you went. You went and you smiled.
(a beat)
I used to go to Mayer and say, 'Mr. Mayer, can't you give me better pictures?' And he'd say, 'Joan, darling, I have your best interests at heart. Your star will always rise at M.G.M. I care for you. You're like a daughter to me.'
(a beat)
But somehow, always, just as he got to the word 'daughter' his hand wound up on my right tit.
(she pauses; shakes her head)
I wore that blouse till it was rags.

Then Joan's attitude changes abruptly. She straightens in her seat and laughs a short, harsh laugh.

JOAN
(continuing; ironic)
Oh, poor Joan. Poor me.
(she gets up)
Let's go. I'll sign the contract.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE'S CAR - NIGHT

Mike is driving her back to her car at the Metro lot. They ride in silence. Then:

MIKE
You okay?

JOAN
(she means it)
I'm fine.

MIKE
It's the right thing, Joan. The money's lower, but it's a five-year deal.
(a beat)
Oh, this goddamn town. No matter how many times you want to walk away, you can't. No matter how many faces you want to spit in, you can't.

CONTINUED:

JOAN
This town's no different from any
other town. You hang on, you don't
walk away, and you swallow your
spit.
(a beat)
You say Hollywood's a whore? I'll
be a bigger whore -- I'll screw
Hollywood. Whatever I am here,
I'd have been any place else.
(a smiles; dead
honest)
Only here there's more room.

CUT TO:

EXT. METRO PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Mike walks with Joan to her car, kisses her cheek, and leaves. Joan, her hand on the car's door handle, stands for a moment staring at the huge, lighted M.G.M. sign.

JOAN
(soft; still looking
at the sign)
Hey, Louis B. Mayer?

Gently, almost delicately, she fake-spits toward the sign.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S CAR - DAY

Joan is returning from shopping; the back of her car is filled with blooming potted flowers and other packages. As she pulls into her driveway, she sees Ada White and two other faithful fans sitting on the curb, hoping for a glimpse of their favorite star. They leap to their feet and wave. Joan, who isn't wearing any makeup and has a scarf tied over her hair, groans, but manages a big but rather false smile for them.

JOAN
(holding the smile,
but talking through
it -- just for herself;
her lips barely moving)
Jesus Christ, don't they live
someplace?

CUT TO:

EXT. JOAN'S BACK YARD - DAY

Preparations are being made for an outside dinner party. Tables are being set up, workmen are scurrying around, gardeners are clipping, etc. Joan, dressed as in the previous scene, is on an extension phone.

JOAN
(exasperated)
No, tomorrow will not do. The party is tomorrow. If you paint the chairs tomorrow, my guests will have to sit on wet paint. Now, that doesn't make much sense, does it?
(she listens for a moment)
I don't care about th...

Abruptly she hangs up, interrupting herself in mid-sentence. She turns to a female secretary who hovers nervously nearby.

JOAN
(continuing)
A sit-down dinner for twenty people I mostly hate and I can't even get the goddamn chairs painted.

The secretary murmurs sympathetically, but Joan ignores her.

JOAN
(continuing; pointing toward the street)
Go get those awful girls out there on the street. I'll be down in five minutes.

The secretary heads toward the street. Joan runs for the house.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Ada White and the other two girls look as if they've died and gone to heaven -- total happiness to be in Joan Crawford's back yard. They are working furiously: Ada and one other girl are on their knees painting lawn chairs, while the third picks up grass clippings from the recently mowed lawn.

CONTINUED:

Joan is dressed as before, but has taken off the headscarf, applied makeup and looks terrific. She stands smoking, watching them work. As in the scene outside the M.G.M. gates, her diction is a touch -- just a touch -- fancier.

JOAN
You three are so dear to help me
like this. I am so appreciative.
(she moves to stroke
one girl's hair)
It's wonderful to have friends
one can count on.

At the use of the word "friend," the girl's face beams and she works even harder. Ada White's attitude is different -- more serious. It is clear that she really cares about Joan. When she speaks, her tone is factual, almost flat.

ADA
I'd do anything for you.

Thrown by the intensity in Ada's voice, Joan falls out of her movie-star diction for a moment.

JOAN
What?

ADA
(same delivery)
Anything.

Puzzled, Joan tries to bring the conversation back to a lighter plane.

JOAN
(moving toward the
house)
So dear...

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

It is the day of the dinner party, and Joan is completely dressed and made up. Several people hired for the evening -- a bartender, extra maids, etc. -- hustle around as Joan strides through the room on her way outside, exiting as she finishes her orders.

CONTINUED:

JOAN

Move those chairs closer together, get the lights on, that plant -- out, check on the hors d'oeuvres, and somebody find my cigarettes.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BACK YARD - EARLY EVENING

The two large tables are covered and set with beautiful china and crystal. Joan's secretary and Ada White are arranging the centerpieces and placing the silver.

JOAN

(a bit sharp)

No, Ada, no. The wine glass here, the water glass here.

ADA

(crushed)

I forgot which way you said.

JOAN

It's all right not to know, but you should only have to be told once.

(more for herself than Ada)

I only had to be told once.

Turning away, she catches sight of herself in a large window which, because of the lights inside, acts as a pale mirror. She straightens almost imperceptibly, gives herself the same kind of appraising look she gave the table, and is again satisfied.

JOAN

(continuing)

Okay, bring 'em on.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The GUESTS have arrived; though they range in age from late twenties to late sixties, all are well dressed, expansive and appear to be affluent. Among them we SEE Mike Levee, Joan's agent and the Director from the earlier scene. Joan is everywhere -- joining a group for a few seconds, laughing brightly, then moving toward a waiter to point out drinks that need freshening.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BACK YARD - NIGHT

Though the yard has outdoor lighting, there are scores of candles burning everywhere, giving a soft glow to the faces of the twenty diners. Conversation is lively, and maids unobtrusively serve the guests. Joan sits at the head of one table, managing simultaneously to hold a conversation with the man on her right and to keep an eye on the general proceedings. She is in control.

The talk has been divided into three small groups at Joan's table until one man, CALVIN BURNE, speaks a bit louder drawing the whole table's attention.

BURNE
(three quick scotches before dinner and now working hard on the wine)
... and anybody who doesn't like my picture should be killed.

1ST WOMAN
(mutters)
He believes in mass murder?

There is a small rustle of laughter around the table. Several faces assume "Oh, God, here we go again" expressions, and the group draws together to tease Burne.

BURNE
(impervious)
... should be shot. Shot to death.
(a beat)
God, that was a good picture.

2ND WOMAN
Except for the script.

DIRECTOR
And a third-rate director.

1ST WOMAN
And a shitty leading man.

BALD MAN
(brightly, as if to compliment)
I liked the credits.

ANOTHER MAN
(same reading as the Bald Man)
I liked part of the credits.

CONTINUED:

MIKE
(same tone as the
other two)
I liked the steak I had before
I saw the picture.

I thought it
was Calvin
Burne?

1ST WOMAN
(calling to the
other table)
Paul's doing his 'I-made-a-goddamn-masterpiece-and-no-one-liked-it' speech.

The diners at the other table groan and one MAN speaks.

MAN
(an imitation;
evidently he's heard
it all before)
'And anyone who doesn't like it
should be killed!'

Both tables are focused on Burne, who turns to Joan.

BURNE
(hopeful)
You liked it, didn't you, Joan?

Joan gives a perfect delivery: the tone is balanced so that she convinces Burne and plays to her other guests at the same time. A perfect delivery.

JOAN
I loved your movie, Cal.

Burne smiles, contented, and the other guests go back to their conversations, also satisfied.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

A few of the guests have gone, but fifteen or so remain. Joan, who is still doing her Perfect Hostess act, looks a bit tired. Her smile is strained. She excuses herself from a group and moves toward the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joan enters, the smile still on her face. The smile fades quickly and she stands for a moment, heaving a sigh and looking at the floor.

CONTINUED:

Then, to the surprise of Ada White and the servants who happen to be in the kitchen, she violently shakes her hands at the wrists several times, as if flicking off something she didn't want on them. At the same time she makes a noise in her throat -- a noise of absolute disgust: "A-a-a-a-h-h-hg-g!" Then she turns, arranges her face again, and goes back into the living room.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BACK YARD - NIGHT

Ada is helping the servants to clear and dismantle the two large tables. As she does this, she listens to Joan's VOICE, coming from the living room.

JOAN (O.S.)
(her movie-star diction)
... Always so kind to me -- always. Even when I was just getting started, I could go to him with the smallest problem and say, 'Mr. Mayer, I'm concerned about the picture I'm working on.' He'd always take the time to speak with me, listen to me, and try to help me with my problem...

As Ada listens, fascinated...

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - NIGHT

NOISE from the party is HEARD as Joan takes the hat of a late arrival to the party. Tall, heavy shouldered, dark, intelligent, he is a corporate lawyer who loves his work. He also is as strong, as charming, and as selfish as Joan. He's a match for her -- his name is JAKE HUBBARD.

Joan is overjoyed to see him, pulling him into a corner with easy intimacy, glancing around to make sure she's not overheard.

JOAN
(she doesn't mean it)
Rotten bastard.

JAKE
(neither does he)
Rotten bitch.

CONTINUED:

JOAN
You were gone over a month.

JAKE
I was gone three weeks, and I'm leaving again Wednesday.

JOAN
I hate lawyers.

JAKE
I hate actresses.

JOAN
I thought you weren't coming.

JAKE
(puts an arm around her waist)
I *said* I'd come.

JOAN
You said you'd come *early*.

JAKE
I said I'd *try* to come early.

JOAN
You said...

JAKE
Hey. Shut up a minute.

He leans over and gives her a quick, thorough kiss, then puts her arm in his and heads toward the other guests.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joan and Jake enter the room.

JOAN
(the hostess again)
Everybody, look who came late!

Most of the guests know Jake. He says a general hello to the room, and shakes the hand of the man nearest him.

JOAN
(continuing; very mannered)
It's impossible to expect manners from Jake, but he's so droll I always forgive him.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE
(gives her a look)
That's me. Droll as hell.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - LATER

The two have made love. Jake has a towel wrapped around him and is rummaging around for cigarettes. Joan lies in bed, a sheet pulled up to her chin. Jake has just finished telling her something, and Joan is laughing full-out.

JOAN
That's not true!

JAKE
(hand on his heart)
As God is my witness.
(making fun of her hostess act)
You think somebody as droll as I am would lie?

He finds his cigarettes and gets back in bed, lying on top of the sheet.

JAKE
(continuing; after a beat -- another story)
I ever tell you about my Aunt Dolly?

JOAN
(still laughing)
I don't want to hear.

JAKE
Sure you do.

JOAN
(as above)
Please, no.

JAKE
(expansive)
My Aunt Dolly never got married. She wasn't ugly or anything, she just wasn't pretty -- you know? Her hair was nice, though: she had lots of dark brown shiny hair.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JAKE (CONT'D)
(a beat)
She was proud of being a virgin -- called it her secret treasure. Used to say, 'I have a secret treasure all my own that no man will ever know.' Well, one day she came over to our house all nervous because she had to go to the doctor. Wanted my mother to go with her. I was -- I don't know, eleven, twelve -- but I was the only one home, so she took me.

JOAN
(weakly; tired from laughing)
No.

JAKE
(going right on)
So-o-o. So. We get to the doctor's office and Aunt Dolly's all red-faced and shaking and she tells the nurse she wants me in the room while the doctor's with her. They gave her some static, but she put her foot down, and after she's been in the examining room a couple of minutes they call me, and in I went.
(a beat)
They sat me down behind her. She was in this chair like a dentist's chair -- she was facing away from me, you know? Had all her clothes on, shoes and everything, but her legs were up in these metal things, like stirrups.

JOAN
(even weaker; beginning to laugh)
No.

JAKE
I didn't pay much attention; just read a magazine, I think. Anyway, BAM! The doctor dropped a big metal tray. He jumped to catch it, and BAM! He hit the end of Aunt Dolly's chair with his hip. The chair spun around, I look up...
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JAKE (CONT'D)
(he makes a big gesture, his arms spread wide to imitate Aunt Dolly's legs)
... And there's Aunt Dolly's Secret Treasure right in front of my face.
(a beat; dry)
Looked like a bear with its mouth open.

Joan pulls the sheet over her head and roars with laughter.

JAKE
(continuing)
A brown bear with its mouth open.

Joan laughs harder.

JAKE
(continuing)
A big brown bear with its mouth open.

Still under the sheet, we can't see Joan, but her legs kick wildly as she laughs.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S STUDY - DAY

From the way Joan is dressed and made up, it is obvious she is between pictures. Five or six scripts are beside her as she sits on a sofa flipping irritatedly through a script she is reading. She makes a smaller version of the disgusted sound we heard earlier and throws the script away -- hard. Then she reaches for another.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - ANOTHER DAY

Smoking furiously, obviously not happy, Joan signs check after check after check -- paying bills her secretary has prepared for her.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S KITCHEN - VERY LATE AT NIGHT

Joan, bored, wanders to the refrigerator, opens it, and, not very interested, pulls a small piece from a roast beef. She leans against the sink, eating without appetite.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S ENTRANCE HALL - LATER

Dressed as she was in the preceding scene, Joan hurries toward the vase in which Brian Barry dropped his phone number. She sticks her arm into the vase, can't reach bottom, then turns the vase upside down. The folded piece of paper falls out. Joan takes it and heads toward the phone. Her face and attitude say, "It's not much, but it'll help to pass the time."

CUT TO:

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

From a distance, we SEE Joan and two actors shooting a scene from a movie. We do not hear any of the dialogue, but Joan does not really seem to be fully focused. The scene finishes, and Joan walks toward her dressing room.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

As Joan enters, we SEE at the same time she does that Jake is lying full-length on her sofa. She rushes to him and gives him a kiss, then draws back.

JOAN
No. Damned if I'm going to kiss you. Two weeks and not even a phone call.

JAKE
I was in...

JOAN
(finishing the sentence for him)
'... the New York office and I worked day and night.' I know, I know, I know.

JAKE
It's true.

JOAN
I get lonesome.

JAKE
Marry another actor.

JOAN
(stung)
Kiss my ass.

CONTINUED:

JAKE
(not at all worried)
Kiss my furry ass.

JOAN
(suggestive)
You think I won't?

He smiles. She smiles.

JOAN
(continuing; she half means it)
Why don't we get married?

JAKE
(deadpan)
I'd rather die.

JOAN
(ignores it)
I do get lonesome, though.

JAKE
Have a baby.

JOAN
Without a husband? How?

JAKE
Buy one.

Their conversation continues, but her attention is divided. We can SEE that the idea has taken root in Joan's mind.

CUT TO:

INT. MIKE LEVEE'S OFFICE - ANOTHER DAY

Joan is talking fast; Mike looks dubious.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joan, Mike Levee, Joan's PUBLICITY MAN, and a third man are in heavy conversation. The third man nods vehemently and starts to dial the phone.

CUT TO:

EXT. L.A. AIRPORT - NIGHT

Almost, but not quite incognito, Joan heads toward an airplane, wearing a large hat with a heavy veil. She walks a few yards behind the other boarding passengers, not wanting to be seen.

CUT TO:

INT. THE AIRPLANE - NIGHT

While the stewardess announces that the passengers are on board flight number 12 to New York and goes on with her spiel, Joan stares steadily out the window, keeping her face averted from her seatmate.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

The flight is in progress. One or two people, including Joan's seatmate, are asleep. Others are reading, etc. Joan glances around, bored by the lack of attention. Raising her veil, she glances around, letting her face be seen; nobody notices. Then she pulls the hat off, crawling over her sleeping seatmate.

As she walks to the front of the plane to ask the stewardess for a totally unwanted drink of water, we HEAR a sibilant murmur run up the plane with her. Mostly we can HEAR only her name being whispered over and over: "Joan Crawford, Joan Crawford, Joan Crawford." She stands at the front of the plane as if totally unaware of the furor she has caused, then heads back toward her seat, satisfied.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

In a different dress, Joan gets out of a cab and walks into a slightly seedy office building.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Joan pauses in front of a door with the words, "Manhattan Adoption Agency" lettered across it, then enters.

CUT TO:

INT. ADOPTION AGENCY - DAY

Joan is ushered into an inner office, where a small, meek-looking man, MR. EDMONDS, rises to greet her.

CONTINUED:

His office walls are filled with huge, three-foot blowups of babies' pictures; these pictures are all outrageously cute. Some of the infants are smiling hugely, showing toothless gums; some are nose to nose with equally cute puppies; some are naked in the classic white bearskin rug pose. In all, they give the place a slightly phony look, the look of a business more interested in money than the placing of children.

MR. EDMONDS
Miss Crawford, it's a pleasure.

JOAN
(not rude, just factual)
I want a baby. A girl. A blonde.

MR. EDMONDS
Well, ah, that's a pretty stiff order. We can't always be that specific. And your case is a difficult one -- you being a single parent.

JOAN
I'm a movie star. I can give a child anything it needs. And I want it.

MR. EDMONDS
Well, Miss Crawford, I can see that you like to move fast. But speed in a case like this is expensive.

JOAN
Name your price.

MR. EDMONDS
(evasive)
We don't always know exact figures at the outset, but...

JOAN
I say, name your price.

Mr. Edmonds smiles, and reaches for a pile of pictures.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOWER-MIDDLE CLASS HOLLYWOOD RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

The street is lined with small stucco bungalows, each with tiny, identical front porches.

CONTINUED:

An expensive car eases down the street and stops at the bungalow nearest the CAMERA. Joan exits and the CAMERA FOLLOWS her to the front porch.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BUNGALOW - DAY

Joan and a rather slovenly gray-haired woman are seated on a sofa that is covered with faded, floral slipcovers. Joan opens her purse and hands the woman a fair-sized bunch of bills with a rubber band around them. The woman counts them methodically while Joan impatiently taps her foot.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF JOAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Dressed differently, the gray-haired woman from the preceding scene and a man get out of a disreputable car. The woman is carrying an infant. They start toward Joan's house, but don't make it: Joan bursts through the door and meets them, taking the baby from the woman and starting back inside. The woman tries to talk to Joan, but is ignored. Joan hurries inside, leaving them on the walk.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Ada White, Joan's secretary, and one or two servants we've seen before stand nearby, trying for a glimpse of the baby, but Joan avoids them and heads upstairs.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joan enters the room and shuts the door behind her. Only then does she remove the lightweight blanket covering the baby's face.

The baby is beautiful: very fair skin, the palest of blue eyes, and a surprising amount of hair so blonde it is almost white. Joan is ecstatic.

JOAN
Oh, my God, it's beautiful. So beautiful.

CONTINUED:

More and more excited, she walks around the room, but she talks to herself rather than to the baby, and she doesn't realize she's calling the baby "it."

JOAN
(continuing)
I'll buy it wonderful dresses, and later on we can go places together. We can laugh.

She stops walking and smiles down at the baby again.

JOAN
(continuing; her words are full of love, but it's a hungry love, a bit scary)
So beautiful. And it's mine.
(she leans her face close to the baby and whispers)
Christina.

The calliope MUSIC we HEARD before the credits COMES UP as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOAN'S BACK YARD - DAY (1948)

The birthday party we saw before the opening credits is over. Though all the guests are gone, the full-size carousel still turns. Nine-year-old Christina stands watching it, fascinated. Joan calls from the house.

JOAN (O.S.)
(a quite different tone from the way she said the name in the preceding scene)
Christina! ChrisTINa! All right, young lady, march yourself in here and clean up this mess. I want all the wrapping thrown away, but save the ribbons.

Slowly, regretfully, Christina turns away from the carousel.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S DINING ROOM - EVENING (SAME DAY)

Joan, Christina, and CHRISTOPHER, Joan's adopted son, age five, are seated at the table, eating.

CONTINUED:

Ada White is with them: she has become a secretary-driver-sometime-maid-gofer for Joan. Though she eats with the family, she keeps a pencil and a secretary's pad next to her plate.

CHRISTINA
(still excited)
I got two sweaters from Ruthie and a gold charm bracelet from Mr. Warner and a pretend makeup kit fr...

JOAN
(not too interested)
Yes, dear. They were lovely. Now eat your dinner.
(to Ada)
Send flowers to Hansen's wife. It's her birthday next week.

ADA
(scribbling)
What's her name?

JOAN
I don't know what her name is -- I'm not the secretary.
(kinder)
She's that mousey type with the grey hair. Hell, I don't care... Send a card saying, 'Happy Birthday, Mousey Type With The Gray Hair,' if you want to.

ADA
(smiles)
I'll get her name.

JOAN
And I've got a list of...

CHRISTINA
(too excited to keep still)
Oh, and did you see my bicycle?

JOAN
(gives her a hard look)
I was talking, Christina.
(back to Ada)
... a list of new additions to the Christmas card list.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOAN (CONT'D)
It's on the top of my desk. Add the new names, cross off any dead ones, and...

CHRISTINA
(slightest of whispers; to Christopher)
It's red and white...

JOAN
(snaps her fingers and points)
To your room!

CHRISTINA
I was just telling him...

JOAN
Do I have to speak to you again?

Christina gets up from the table, close to tears.

CHRISTINA
It's my birthday.

JOAN
Yes, but I paid for the party, I paid for your new dress, and I bought the food you're too busy to eat, and I say march. Now say goodnight.

CHRISTINA
(by rote; a performance she's been taught)
Good night, Ada. Good night, Christopher. Good night, Mommie.

Christina turns to leave and Joan clears her throat ever-so-slightly. The throat clearing is a warning that Christina recognizes; she flinches and turns back guiltily.

CHRISTINA
(continuing)
... Dearest.

Christina exits. Joan turns back to Ada.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOAN
That one pushes. She always pushes.

We HEAR Christina's FOOTSTEPS going up the stairs.

JOAN
(continuing)
And pick up your feet, Christina. Must you clomp up the stairs every time?
(back to Ada)
Always.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE ELEVATOR - DAY

Loaded with packages, Joan and Christina ride down in an elevator. Other passengers stare at Joan, then smile indulgently at Christina, who is again dressed beautifully -- every hair ribbon in place, her white shoes gleaming.

For the benefit of the other passengers, Joan speaks to Christina.

JOAN
Hold my hand, darling, in case the elevator stops suddenly.

CHRISTINA
(not at all rude; just reasonable)
Mommie, don't be silly -- I won't fall down in an elevator.

Christina smiles, though, and puts her hand in Joan's. As the elevator stops, Joan holds Christina back until the other passengers have left the car. Only then do they exit the car.

CUT TO:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - MAIN FLOOR - DAY

With no expression on her face, Joan leads Christina around a corner near a stairwell. When they are more or less out of sight, Joan grabs Christina's dress at the shoulder and yanks her -- literally drags her -- further out of sight.

CONTINUED:

JOAN
(hissing the words; occasionally jerking Christina for emphasis)
You sick bitch! You don't call me names!

CHRISTINA
(being jerked so hard the words are not too clear)
What? What... di... I say?

JOAN
I am your mother! You don't call me 'silly' in public!

She releases Christina and holds up an open palm as if to hit her. Christina dodges, throwing both hands up.

JOAN
(continuing; a bit louder)
You see this? Do you?

Christina nods.

JOAN
(continuing)
I'll lay you out on Wilshire Boulevard flat of your back. You hear me? Don't you ev...

Joan stops as an ELDERLY WOMAN, who has noticed them, approaches.

WOMAN
(not liking what she sees)
Is something wrong here?

Joan is so angry that, for once, she forgets her public, her image, everything.

JOAN
(dragging Christina away)
Oh, go die someplace, old woman.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Joan walks quickly into the room.

CONTINUED:

She is full of life this particular morning -- feeling good. Playfully, she pulls the covers off of Christina who doesn't know at first whether her mother is happy or angry.

JOAN
Okay, honey, let's go.

Joan moves to the closet and chooses four or five of Christina's prettiest dresses and tosses them on the bed. Seeing that Joan is in a good mood, Christina jumps out of bed smiling.

One of Christina's dresses is on a wire hanger. Joan removes the hanger, and clucks her tongue at Christina in a light, reproving manner.

JOAN
(continuing)
Get your working clothes on. A photographer's coming at ten, and ask me who gets her picture taken?

CHRISTINA
(delighted)
I do?

JOAN
(she kisses her thumb and touches it it to Christina's mouth)
Tha-a-at's right. And I want you to smile. You will show lots of teeth.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A REPORTER and Joan's Publicity Man hover on the edge of the activity in the room: a photographer has posed Joan and Christina (who is smiling hugely) against a mantle. They are wearing identical, mother-and-daughter outfits: flowered pinafores with white puffy-sleeved blouses under them. Behind the two, plainly VISIBLE on the mantle, is Joan's Oscar. As the photographer positions them:

PUBLICITY MAN
(to reporter; pure bullshit)
She's adopted two babies to raise on her own.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PUBLICITY MAN (CONT'D)

And at work, whenever she finishes a picture, she gives presents to the whole crew. Her co-workers love her -- they consider Joan just one of the gang.

Snap. The photographer takes his picture and FREEZES them momentarily against the mantle.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOAN'S BACK YARD - DAY

Again Joan and Christina are dressed alike: they wear frilly dresses and carry matching parasols. Christina is still smiling mightily. As the photographer positions them:

PUBLICITY MAN

(to reporter; more bullshit)

Every minute that Joan isn't on the set, she tries to spend with her children. She believes in discipline, though -- that's how she got to be where she is, and so Christina and Christopher have to mind, and they have their chores to do every day.

(a beat)

But all in all, they think their mother's pre-e-ety wonderful. In fact, Christina says, 'My Mommie's not just my Mommie -- she's also my best friend.'

Snap. The photographer takes his picture and FREEZES them momentarily on the lush green lawn.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S KITCHEN - DAY

There are several windows, and the light in this room is particularly bright. Joan is wearing a cotton housedress -- totally unlike anything we've seen her in before. Over that is an apron. Christina wears a dress that does not match Joan's, but has on a small chef's hat.

They are pretending to bake a cake: Joan holds a huge (empty) bowl and a long wooden spoon. Both she and Christina peer at a cookbook that is propped up against another bowl. As the photographer positions them:

CONTINUED:

PUBLICITY MAN
(to reporter; still
more bullshit)
Sunshine and Joan are synonymous. Lots of times she and Christina get up early on weekends and spend hours in the kitchen. Joan always says, 'When the two of us get in the kitchen, we're never sure what we'll wind up with, but we always have loads of fun.'
(a beat)
More seriously, though, Joan is an excellent cook, and she often makes gourmet meals for small groups of friends.

Snap. The photographer takes his picture and FREEZES them momentarily as they peer into the cookbook.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOAN'S POOL - AFTERNOON

Joan and Christina are at one end of the pool, in position for a race. Christopher stands at the opposite end. Over his head, he holds a bottle of orange soda that seems to glow in the California sunshine.

CHRISTOPHER
The winner gets this bottle of pop! Go!

The two start swimming. Christina is a strong swimmer, and she is trying very hard. Joan holds back, letting Christina stay ahead of her for two-thirds of the distance. Then she increases her own pace, easily passing her nine-year-old daughter and touching the edge a full stroke before Christina.

CHRISTINA
(disappointed)
Oh-h. I almost won, though.

Joan pulls herself out of the pool, takes the prize from Christopher, and drinks a long drink.

JOAN
(throwaway line, as
she struggles into a
terrycloth robe)
Christina, honey, you never had a chance. I always win -- I can beat the world.

CONTINUED:

Joan doesn't notice Christina's crestfallen look -- she merely smiles and takes another long drink.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Joan is dressed to the teeth. Christina wears a pretty dress and white gloves. As Joan talks, Christina matches her expressions to Joan's; if Joan laughs, Christina laughs too; if Joan is somber, Christina frowns -- anything to please Mommie.

JOAN
(as she drives)
... I think it looks good for us to go out together sometimes -- you'll be my date, huh? Sit up straight, Christina, don't wrinkle your dress.
(a beat)
If there are photographers there, you just smile and hold my hand. Don't say anything. If somebody asks you a question, just look at me, and I'll answer for you. And don't order more than you want to eat, and sit up straight, Christina.
(a beat)
We'll have some fun, huh?

CUT TO:

INT. THE MOCAMBO - NIGHT

A fawning headwaiter leads Joan and Christina to a table with an excellent view of the club. A waiter appears immediately.

JOAN
A weak scotch and water for me, and a Shirley Temple for my daughter. She's my date tonight.

The waiter smiles at Christina and moves away.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

A MAN and his WIFE have come to Joan's table for a drink. Joan is animated and smiling. All three are having a fine time discussing a friend who's had bad luck.

CONTINUED:

MAN
... and so they threw Harrington
off the picture.

JOAN
No!

WIFE
Yes! And they just bought in
Bel Air, too.

JOAN
Oh, poor Frank. Will they pick
up his contract?

MAN
No chance.

WIFE
His last two pictures...

As the three talk, the CAMERA MOVES to Christina, who is bored to death, playing with the swizzle sticks from two empty Shirley Temple glasses in front of her.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

The Man and his Wife from the previous scene are leaving. Joan waves goodbye, then turns back to Christina.

JOAN
Losers, both of 'em.

Now Joan is bored. She sighs, "Ah, God," lights a cigarette, and looks around. Then she notices a particular MAN seated at a table. Like the other two men we've seen her attracted to, this man is dark and large.

JOAN
(continuing; to
Christina; purely
rhetorical)
Isn't that Dave Wilson over there?
That new one from what's-her-name's
picture?

Christina just looks blank.

JOAN
(continuing)
It is. I met him once.

She stops a waiter and asks for a pencil and paper.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Joan gives a note to the waiter and points out Dave Wilson. The CAMERA FOLLOWS the waiter as he delivers the note to Wilson, who looks up, glances around to find Joan, and smiles broadly.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dressed as in the preceding scene, Joan and Christina are working hurriedly. A drink beside her, Joan is throwing together a lunchmeat sandwich and a glass of milk for Christina.

JOAN
... So much more fun, isn't it, to sort of rough it? The food's lousy at Mocambo, anyway. Just this once we'll break the rules, and you can eat in your room. Hurry, though, Mommie's expecting company.

As the DOORBELL RINGS, she hands the sandwich and milk to Christina, kisses her thumb and waves it in the general direction of Christina's cheek.

JOAN
(continuing)
Run on, now. Run on.

They both rush out of the kitchen, Christina going upstairs, Joan toward the door. The DOORBELL RINGS again, a longer ring. In spite of the fact that she's in a hurry, Joan stops and turns around as Christina climbs the stairs.

JOAN
(continuing; soft but strong)
Pick up your feet when you walk!

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Joan opens the door. Dave Wilson enters. They both smile.

DAVE
(somehow his one word is sexy)
Hi.

CONTINUED:

JOAN
(so is hers)
Hi.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S BEDROOM - LATER

A small light burns, weakly illuminating the room. The remains of the lunchmeat sandwich and the empty glass sit on a table near the bed. Christina lies in bed, under the covers, her face turned toward the wall. She is telling herself a story.

CHRISTINA
(normal, almost
conversational
tone)
... in a house with trees all around it, and there was no way she could get out.
(pause)
But then this voice she could hear sometimes said, 'Look in the red drawer and you can find a key.' And so she did and then she found it and she could get through the door.
(pause)
And when she got through the door it was...
(a beat; she decides
to tell it another
way)
... No. And when she got through the door there were still all these big trees around, and so she started running toward this other place where...

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

There is a flurry of activity in the room. Joan's hair is fixed slightly differently, and she carries a small makeup case and a suitcase. Ada White, Joan's maid, and a third woman we haven't seen before, MRS. HAYWARD, hurry around, carrying other suitcases, etc. Christina and Christopher watch silently.

JOAN
(to Ada)
Did you pack nightgowns?

CONTINUED:

ADA
Yesterday.

JOAN
(to the children)
Now. Mommie's going to stay at the studio while she's making this picture. Ada's going with me, bless her heart for helping.
(brightly)
And you two will have Mrs. Hayward here to take care of you. You be sure and behave now, and show her how well-mannered you are.

CHRISTINA
(quiet, but urgent)
Let me go with you.

JOAN
(conscious of Mrs. Hayward's presence)
Now, now. I've explained it to you. Mrs. Hayward will...

CHRISTINA
Please.

JOAN
(stiffening)
Christina, I am the mother, and you are the child -- you are only nine years old. You must believe that I know what's best when I tell you something.

CHRISTINA
(she wants it)
But please.

JOAN
(what little patience she has is gone)
Why do you defy me? I can talk myself blue in the goddamn face to you, and you...

She breaks off in mid-sentence. She makes the disgusted sound in her throat we've heard twice before, and spins around, heading for the door, with Ada following in her wake.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Christina wanders from room to room. Hearing VOICES, she goes into the kitchen, where a cook and Joan's maid are gossiping. They stop talking and smile politely at her, but it's clear that they are only waiting for her to leave so they can go on with their talk.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Christina and Christopher sit close together on a sofa. Placed across their laps is a photograph album which they are leafing through. As they turn the pages we SEE various pictures in CLOSEUP.

The first one shows Joan, Christina, Christopher, and a man at the beach. Underneath the picture, in a clear, rounded hand, is written, "The four of us in Carmel, 1943." The second photograph shows Joan, Christina, Christopher, and a man -- all four of them are dressed in white, and Christina holds an Easter basket proudly in front of her. Underneath is written, "Easter, 1944." The third photograph shows the same four people standing on the lawn. They are in casual, weekend clothes, and are laughing. Underneath is written, "My gang and me, 1944."

There is one odd thing about all the pictures: in each one, the man's head has been cut out, leaving a round, black hole where his face should be.

CHRISTINA
(to Christopher,
soft)
If she doesn't like you, she makes
you disappear.

CUT TO:

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY

Joan's picture is shooting; she isn't in this scene, and she and Ada stand off to the side. Joan is studying her lines.

JOAN
(tossing the script
aside)
Two more weeks to go on this
thing. If I can get through
this script, I can get through
anything.
(a beat; then,
out of boredom)
Where'd you grow up, Ada?

CONTINUED:

ADA
(surprised)
Oh, uh, Indianapolis. Just
outside of Indianapolis.

JOAN
What did you do before you came
with me?

ADA
I was a typist.

JOAN
But when? You were always at the
studio or outside my house.

ADA
I took a night job.
(a beat)
So I could see you during the
day.

JOAN
Not much of a life, was it?

ADA
(hesitant)
The first time I saw you was in
a movie house in Indianapolis. When
you came on the screen, I just had
never seen anything so... wonderful.
(a beat)
I left the theater that night --
it was in April -- and I walked
all the way home. I couldn't get
over it -- you, the way you looked
up there. It was... wonderful.

Joan seems sincerely touched. She kisses Ada on the cheek and smiles at her. Ada blooms under Joan's attention.

ADA
(continuing; expansive)
We didn't always live in
Indianapolis. My daddy died when
I was five, and Mother had to
take a job in a factory. She
always saw to it that I had nice
clothes, though.

Since the focus of the conversation is not on her, Joan grows a bit restless.

CONTINUED:

ADA
(continuing)
And whenever she could, she gave me movie money on the weekends. I used to have such a crush on Robert Taylor.

Joan is frankly bored.

ADA
(continuing)
I came to Hollywood because my sister's husband ran off, and she had this little boy who was born with a cleft palate. Jamie, his name is. He still can't talk real plain...

Joan can't stand it any longer. She retrieves her script.

JOAN
(silvery little laugh)
Ada, dear, you'll absolutely wreck my concentration.

Ada accepts the rebuke without complaint.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Joan, Jake, Christina, and Christopher are having dinner. The restaurant is an expensive one, dimly lit. Joan is cutting Christopher's meat for him. She stops and reaches her hand under the table toward Christina, who sits on her right. Christina gasps and jumps: Joan has pinched the child's leg.

JOAN
Sit up to the table, I've told you twice.

She goes back to cutting Christopher's meat.

CHRISTOPHER
I can do that, Mommie.

Joan stops cutting the meat and just looks at him. And looks. And looks some more. Christopher jumps as he remembers.

CONTINUED:

CHRISTOPHER
(continuing)
Oh! Dearest!

JAKE
Why don't you give those kids a break? You've been on their asses all night. the

JOAN
(unruffled)
You just practice law and butt out. These kids are mine.
(as she remembers)
Oh. Run call Mike Levee for me. I was supposed to check with him before eight.

JAKE
Let me get this straight. Exactly what am I supposed to be, your bull or your butler.

JOAN
Both.

JAKE
You lose.

JOAN
I never lose, when I want to win.

JAKE
Till this time.

Joan isn't angry, but her mettle is up: she's been challenged.

JOAN
(just testing)
I tell you what: either you go call Mike Levee or I'll take the kids and the three of us will go home.

JAKE
(enjoying himself royally)
I'll tell you what: you make one move to leave this table, and I'll yell, 'Thief.' I'll say you groped me under the table and stole my wallet.

CONTINUED:

Immediately, Joan starts to gather purse, gloves, etc.

JAKE
(continuing)
You think I won't?

Joan puts her cigarettes in her purse.

JAKE
(continuing;
conversational tone)
Thief.

JOAN
(to Christina)
Get your gloves, darling.

JAKE
(a bit louder)
Thief.

Joan, ignoring him, pushes her chair back.

JAKE
(continuing; truly
loud)
Thief!

All over the restaurant, heads turn to stare. Joan freezes and pastes a smile on her face.

JOAN
Sh-h!

JAKE
(all smiles)
You want a real scene? I'll give you one.
(softly; questioning)
Thief?

Joan considers for a long moment. She looks around the restaurant: several people are still staring. As much as she wants to win, she likes Jake for getting the upper hand. She grins.

JOAN
(almost affectionate)
Bastard.

JAKE
(the same)
Bitch.

The sun is beginning to go down, turning the clouds incredible shades of red, pink and orange. Joan and Christina walk hand in hand. In her other hand, Joan carries a small flask of liquor which she sips from occasionally.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - SLIGHTLY LATER

The sky is even more beautiful. Joan and Christina are seated on a rock, close together, watching the tide come in. Christina slips an arm around her mother's waist. Joan smiles and makes her familiar gesture -- she kisses her thumb and presses it lightly on Christina's mouth. Then she sips from the flask again. Joan is in a good mood, and she has had just liquor to be open, receptive.

JOAN
Do you miss not having a father?

CHRISTINA
Sometimes I do.

JOAN
Hell, I never had one, either. My mother got married three times, but they all went away. Things were so hard then.
(a beat)
Hell, they're hard now: I dream all the time that I'm sliding over the edge of this building, and there's nothing to hang on to.
(pause; slight smile)
I hung on to those chickens, all right. Did I ever tell you my chicken story?

CHRISTINA
No.

JOAN
I was three or four, I guess. We were dirt poor, and we had these chickens out in back, and one old brooding hen hatched out some little chicks. I'd never seen anything so pretty. I picked up one and it was just adorable, all soft and fuzzy.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOAN (CONT'D)
(a beat)
I loved it so much I hugged it with my hands.
(she cups an imaginary chick in her palms and squeezes)
I loved it until it just sort of went limp. I put that one down and picked up another one. But the same thing happened again. It wasn't till Mother hit me and I heard her screaming that I realized I'd loved almost a dozen of them to death.
(a beat)
Do you understand what I'm trying to tell you?

Christina is willing to say what her mother wants to hear, but she doesn't know whether it's "yes" or "no."

CHRISTINA
I...

JOAN
(brisker tone)
Well, you will, someday. Probably. Maybe.

Joan stretches luxuriously, pleased with the day.

JOAN
(continuing)
Ask me when I was happiest.

CHRISTINA
(puzzled)
When were you happiest?

JOAN
(conversational; a reminiscence)
I was making a movie at Metro. I wasn't big yet, but I was working steady, you know?

Christina nods obediently.

JOAN
(continuing)
I finished work that day, and this guy I'd seen around made a pass at me.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOAN (CONT'D)
He wasn't so good looking, but he had such white teeth.
(a beat)
Anyway, I figured what the hell, so we went out. He took me to a restaurant at the beach and then we went dancing. They played 'My Wonderful One' three times that night -- you know that song?
(she hums a bit of it for Christina)
La da, da da da, how my arms long to hold you...' So pretty.
(a beat)
We went to his place for a while and then he drove me home. He drove away, and I stood there awhile before I went in, and I thought, 'Yes, this will do. I choose this day to remember. I am happy."

Christina just looks at her mother, not knowing what to say.

JOAN
(continuing)
Ask me what man I liked best.

CHRISTINA
(totally lost)
What man did you like best?

JOAN
(smiles)
I won't tell you. Ask me what man I like second best.

CHRISTINA
What man did you like second best?

JOAN
Oh, he was a guy who always made me laugh. He...

Joan stops, coming out of her thoughts and focusing on Christina.

JOAN
(continuing; different tone)
Oh, enough. You look cold, honey. Let's go back to the hotel.

CONTINUED:

They rise and take each other's hand again.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRENTWOOD RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Christina is pulling Christopher along the sidewalk in a red wagon.

CHRISTINA
(making it up as she goes along; as much for herself as for Christopher)
... so then, let's see... so then when daylight came the thing that was after her ran away, and she could come out of the cave, and so she did. But this Prince wasn't there -- the one who told her he'd wait for her.
(a beat)
She cried and cried, but then, um, she heard this voice again...

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Christina is asleep. Suddenly there are LOUD CRASHINGS and THUMPINGS from Christina's closet. Then we HEAR from the closet:

JOAN (O.S.)
(muffled)
God DAMN it!

Christina's eyes fly open, and a look of fear crosses her face. From the lighted closet a shoe box is hurled out and CRASHES against the wall near Christina's bed. The BOX hits the wall flat and CRACKS like a pistol shot. Two more shoe boxes follow. Christina sits bolt upright.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S CLOSET - NIGHT

Joan looks insane: dressed in a velvet evening gown, she wildly rips Christina's clothes off hangers and throws them out of the closet. Then, with a single sweep of her arm, she knocks over a neatly-stacked row of boxes that runs half the length of the closet. Then, with all her strength, she throws Christina's shoes, one by one, into the bedroom.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Christina sits terrified, motionless, as the shoes CRASH against the wall. Christopher is tied down in a "sleep safe" in the other twin bed. He is awake, but when a shoe slams the wall near his bed, he closes his eyes tightly, pretending to be asleep.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CLOSET - NIGHT

Joan, her face twisted, is frantically searching, grabbing handful after handful of clothing on neatly padded hangers, throwing them to the floor with one hand. In the other she is clutching a single wire hanger.

JOAN
(wild)
How many times do I have to tell you... how many times?

She finds another dress on a wire hanger, rips the dress off of it, and throws both wire hangers out the closet door.

JOAN
(continuing; a scream)
NO WIRE HANGERS!

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Panting and disheveled, Joan comes out of the closet, grabs the terrified Christina by the hair and yanks her out of bed. Christina cries out in pain and struggles to wrench free of Joan's death-like grip on her hair.

Joan drags her to the open closet door, whirls her around to face the closet, which looks as if a tornado hit it.

JOAN
(she moves her hands to Christina's shoulders and shakes her violently, screaming)
NO! WIRE! HANGERS!! UNDERSTAND?

CHRISTINA
(terrified into incoherence)
B-but... Mommie... I...

Joan backhands Christina across the mouth.

CONTINUED:

JOAN
How many times have I told you...
No wire hangers in the goddamned
closets!

Again Joan slaps Christina across the face. Crying, Christina tires to cover her face with her hands, but again and again Joan hits her -- the face, the ears, the back of the head. Knocked to the floor, Christina protects her head with both arms. The blows stop.

JOAN
(continuing; quieter,
but still loud)
Maybe now you'll learn to mind me.
(she rips the sheets
and blankets off
Christina's bed)
When I tell you to do something,
I mean it! But you won't listen,
you don't pay any attention, you
have to have it your way.
(a beat)
Maybe this'll teach you I mean
business.

Joan backs across the floor, watching Christina, who is still sobbing on the floor in the jumble of clothes and hangers. Joan's wild look is subsiding: though she is out of breath, her face looks oddly satisfied. A faint smile barely touches her lips.

JOAN
(continuing)
Clean up your mess.

And she is out the door, slamming it behind her. Christina looks at the clock on a nightstand. It reads 2:10. She sits up slowly, tears still running down the face. Then she reaches out and picks up a twisted wire hanger and one last sob escapes her. She glances at Christopher, who is on the verge of tears in sympathy.

Christina starts to crawl around the floor, gathering objects her mother has thrown. She is totally bewildered, totally pitiful.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Joan, dressed to go out, is talking with Ada and the cook as Christina enters. Her face is bruised on one side, and her lip is swollen where Joan hit her.

CONTINUED:

Christina's attitude, as she enters the room, is tentative. Joan, though, acts as if nothing unusual has happened. She speaks to Christina in a polite voice, then goes back to her conversation with Ada.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING (DAYS LATER)

Joan sits in front of a vanity table, applying makeup with the concentration of a brain surgeon. She is barefoot and is wearing only a slip as she spits into an old-fashioned mascara box and dabs at her eyelashes with the brush. Christina watches, fascinated. There is no evidence of strain between them. As Christina watches, the DOORBELL RINGS.

JOAN
Christ, he's early. Run down and let him in, honey, and bring him up.

Christina tears out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - EARLY EVENING

Christina heads off Ada, and opens the door, admitting a man we haven't seen before. He is HAROLD BROSKY, and he looks vaguely like the other men we've seen Joan take to, except that he has sandy hair.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING

Christina leads Brosky into the room. Joan is in the process of pulling on her nylons, and looks up as if surprised. Her slip is pulled half-way up her thighs, but she makes no effort to lower it.

JOAN
(her slightly fancy diction)
Harold, dear, how nice to see you.

He kisses her lightly on the side of the mouth in greeting.

JOAN
(continuing; to Christina)
Would you get him a drink, darling?

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA
What would you like, Mr. Brosky?

BROSKY
Scotch and soda, honey.

JOAN
Oh, call him Uncle Harold, Tina
-- he's been here before.

Christina nods and exits.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Christina pours a man-sized portion of scotch into a glass, starts to add some soda, then stops. She grins and pours more scotch into the glass, almost filling it, then fills the remaining inch or so with a touch of soda. She grins again.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING

Joan is applying perfume from a huge, ornate bottle. Harold stands over her, trying for a kiss. She offers him a kiss.

BROSKY
All smoke and no fire tonight?

Challenged, Joan stands up and slowly moves her arms around him: one of her hands touches the back of his neck, the other caresses his back, buttocks, and leg. Harold puts his arms around her and they kiss. Joan arches her neck in pleasure, and Harold kisses the hollow of her throat. Joan opens her eyes, smiling with pleasure. Her smile fades. In her vanity mirror she sees Christina standing in the doorway, drink in hand -- watching.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Giant Eucalyptus trees line the side of the road. Joan's car whizzes by, and the CAMERA TURNS to watch the car speed on. As we SEE this, we HEAR:

CHRISTINA (V.O.)
Please, Mommie Dearest, I don't
want to go.

CONTINUED:

JOAN (V.O.)
(cool)
Tina, when will you learn that I am your mother and you are my child. I know what's best for you.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)
(talking fast)
Whatever I did, I won't do it again, I promise. I can be better. I promised God last night when I said my prayers -- I told him I'd be good and that I'd blow him a thousand kisses if I didn't have to go. I can be better.
(a beat; desperate)
Just tell me what you want.

JOAN (V.O.)
(as above)
Right now I want you to sit up straight and behave like a little lady.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Joan's car turns into a blacktop driveway. Beside the driveway we SEE a sign reading, "CHADWICK COUNTRY BOARDING SCHOOL."

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Joan, a miserable Christina and MRS. CHADWICK, the school's owner, stand at the rear of Joan's car. Christina's luggage stands near them. In the b.g. we SEE boys and girls on their way to classes.

JOAN
(brightly; to Christina)
You'll see, darling, the time will just _fly_ by, and you can call me collect any time.

Joan walks to the driver's door, followed by the other two.

CONTINUED:

JOAN
(continuing)
And I'll call you, too. You'll be fine.

CHRISTINA
(her eyes on the ground; a world of longing in her words)
Please don't go off and leave me.

Joan reaches out with one hand and cups Christina's chin, raising her face. Christina flinches -- is she about to be slapped? Mrs. Chadwick notices Christina's involuntary movement. Still holding Christina's face up, Joan kisses her thumb, then presses it to Christina's mouth. The gesture means nothing to either of them, though, and they stare at each other for several moments. Then Joan quickly gets into the car and drives away.

CHRISTINA
(continuing; to herself; watching the disappearing car)
What did I do that was so bad?

Mrs. Chadwick speaks sympathetically to Christina, picks up two of her bags, and starts into the office. Christina picks up the third suitcase and follows her. They disappear into the office.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

SAME SCENE - DAY (1953)

The scene is exactly the same: the CAMERA ANGLE is exactly the same. The CAMERA HOLDS on the office door as we begin to HEAR MUSIC: the song is the lush, fifties' version of "Ebb Tide," sung by a man who evidently believes the silly lyrics with all his heart. Then, OVER the MUSIC, coming from inside the office, we HEAR the VOICES of six adolescent girls, SHRIEKING with excited TALK and LAUGHTER. The office door opens, and the six girls burst through.

One of them is Christina, now fourteen. She is taller and a bit thinner, but her hair is still very blonde. The other girls wear pedal pushers and blouses; Christina has on a vaguely old-fashioned dress, one that looks a bit too young for her. Nonetheless, she radiates good health and humor. She is the one responsible for the MUSIC -- in her hand she carries a portable radio, which she now turns up to a DEAFENING LEVEL as the singer works his way to an incredible climax. As Christina PASSES the CAMERA, she hugs the radio to her.

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA

So neat.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Christina and four other girls are poised at the edge of the pool, ready for a race. Two of them, JANICE and VERA, were among the girls in the preceding scene. A woman's VOICE yells "Go!" and the girls dive in.

Christina takes the lead and keeps it easily, outdistancing the other girls and winning by two full lengths. When the other swimmers reach the end of the pool, they laugh and congratulate her.

JANICE

That must be the fastest you ever did it.

VERA

(half-serious; a whisper so the coach won't hear)

Damned if I'll ever swim with you again.

CHRISTINA

(she slaps the water in pure joy)

You know what I want right now?

JANICE AND VERA

(together)

What?

CHRISTINA

You know what I want more than anything in the whole wide world?

VERA

What, for God's sake?

CHRISTINA

A bottle of orange pop.

The girls just look at her, puzzled.

CUT TO:

### INT. THE SCHOOL RECREATION CENTER - DAY

Vera and Janice watch as Christina puts a dime in a soft drink machine and firmly pushes a Nesbitt's Orange button. The BOTTLE RATTLES out, Christina grabs it and heads outside, the two girls following her.

CUT TO:

### EXT. RECREATION CENTER - DAY

Christina holds the orange soda against the sun, so that it glows golden-orange, then drinks.

CHRISTINA
Best I ever had.

She laughs delightedly and drinks deeply from the bottle again.

CHRISTINA
(continuing; all smiles)
Best in the world.

VERA
(to an invisible fourth party who just joined them)
Oh, hello. I'm Vera Sorensen. I'd like you to meet my crazy friend, Christina.
(to Christina)
I worry about you sometimes.

JANICE
(to Vera)
Oh, leave her alone.

VERA
I worry about both of you.

CUT TO:

### INT. CHRISTINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Vera and Janice are Christina's roommates, and the three girls are sprawled on their beds. Vera is studying, Janice is reading a particularly lurid copy of Confidential magazine -- the young Robert Wagner is on the cover -- and Christina is listening to the last throbbing notes of "Ebb Tide" on a small, portable, 45-speed record changer. As soon as the record ends, Christina rejects the arm and starts it at the beginning again.

CONTINUED:

VERA
Oh, shit, Tina! I'm trying to study!

CHRISTINA
Just once more, Vera, then I'll turn it off.

Vera sighs and goes back to her books. Christina throws herself back on her bed, loving the awful song.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Vera is now reading the sleazy Confidential magazine. Christina and Janice are talking softly, aimlessly.

JANICE
There was this boy who stuck his tongue in my mouth once.

CHRISTINA
(shocked but fascinated)
Janice!

JANICE
Well, he did. It was Johnny Marshall.

CHRISTINA
When?

JANICE
Last Easter, when I was home on vacation.

CHRISTINA
Well, how?... I mean, did you ask him to?

JANICE
No! You don't just walk up to somebody and say, 'Would you stick your tongue in my mouth, please?'

Both girls laugh loudly.

CHRISTINA
Did you like it?

CONTINUED:

JANICE
No, but he did.

CHRISTINA
Yuk. What did it feel like?

JANICE
I don't know... it was wet and warm... it just felt like a tongue.

CHRISTINA
(throws herself around on her bed)
O-h-h, yuk!

Both girls laugh again, the universal shrill, delighted laughter of teenage girls.

VERA
(bored)
Both of you -- both of your minds. I worry about both your minds.

Christina and Janice laugh again.

CUT TO:

INT. MRS. CHADWICK'S OFFICE - DAY

Mrs. Chadwick holds a telephone receiver in one hand, the other covering the mouthpiece as Christina runs into the room, dressed for playing volleyball.

MRS. CHADWICK
(stage whisper)
It's your mother again, Tina. She just insisted...

Christina nods and takes the receiver. She has gained confidence in the last five years, and we HEAR that confidence reflected when she speaks to Joan. Her tone is in no way defiant -- simple reasonable.

CHRISTINA
(into phone)
Hello, Mommie, how are you?

Joan's voice is an angry BUZZ.

CHRISTINA
(continuing)
I did call you -- twice -- but you weren't home.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

(more BUZZ)

It's true. I talked with Ada once and the maid once.

(more BUZZ; Christina is weary)

No, Mommie, I'm not calling you a liar, but I'm not lying, either. I did call.

(short, louder BUZZ)

I'm not contradicting you, I...

(more BUZZ)

Sure, I want to come home for Christmas.

(she can't help it; she has to say it)

But I've only been home twice this year, so if you think I've been lying, Mrs. Chadwick will let me stay here for the holidays -- but would you send me those pedal pushers you promised me?

(loudest BUZZ so far; Christina finally interrupts)

Mommie? You got me out of the shower. I'm dripping all over Mrs. Chadwick's rug. I'll have to give you back to her.

Christina hands the receiver to Mrs. Chadwick, who looks unhappy at having to talk to Joan again.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is half dark, but we can SEE Joan sitting in an overstuffed chair, her feet propped up on her vanity table stool. Though her face is still striking, she has aged in the five years that have passed.

And she is very drunk. One arm hangs over the chair arm, holding a half-empty drink. When Joan speaks, her slurred speech is so conversational that at first we think someone is in the room with her -- it takes a while for us to realize that she is repeating lines from her movies.

CONTINUED:

Joan's voice is an incoherent mumble; then her words become clear; though slurred they are still ladylike.

JOAN
... I bake these pies so I can afford the things you want, Veda. I do the best I can.
(she pauses, then repeats the line with a different emphasis)
... I bake these pies so I can afford the things you want, Veda. I do the best I can!
(a pause; mumblings; then louder, rougher)
Yeah? Well you can tell 'em Sadie Thompson'll meet 'em all in hell.
(not a line from a movie -- just rambling)
I-don't-know, I-don't-know, I-don't-know, I-don't-know.
(another movie line)
Listen, fat man, and listen good -- Lane Bellamy won't be run out of town -- I'm here to stay!

She lapses into mumblings again.

CUT TO:

INT. SAME SCENE - MORNING

Joan lies on the bed, fully dressed in the clothes she wore in the preceeding scene. As she wakes, it is clear that she has a monstrous hangover. She forces herself to get up, though, and takes four aspirin from a giant-sized bottle that sits on a bedside table. Then, in spite of the way she feels, she straightens her spine and assumes her normal, excellent posture.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S EXERCISE ROOM - MORNING

Barefoot, wearing old jeans and a blouse, Joan puts herself through her daily exercise. She is miserable, but she does it.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

What must be the largest Christmas tree in the world stands in one corner of the room. Joan, Christina, and Christopher are hanging expensive ornaments on the branches. Scores of beautifully gift-wrapped packages are piled in corners. Ada White brings Joan a drink, and stands watching. Christopher drops an ornament; it bounces, but doesn't break.

JOAN
(with exaggerated
patience; as if to
a retarded person)
If you can't hang the son-of-a-bitch right, leave it alone.
(to Ada)
Is dinner ready?

ADA
It's on the table.

JOAN
Let's eat. You two go wash your hands.

The four of them leave the room. As the CAMERA STAYS in the room and HOLDS on the beautiful Christmas tree, we HEAR:

JOAN (O.S.)
Ada, can you help me with my hair? That man's coming at nine, and...
(she hears the
children go up the
stairs, and yells)
Oh, Christina, will you for the sweet love of God pick up your FEET!

CUT TO:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - LATER

The tree is completely decorated and the packages are placed carefully around it. Joan, Christina, and Christopher are being interviewed for the radio. The two children sit rather stiffly, holding a list of answers, knowing that a performance is expected of them.

INTERVIEWER
(into his
microphone)
No report on Christmas would be complete without a description of how one Hollywood family spends this holiday...
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)
... so now let's hop into an imaginary sleigh and whisk out to the home of one of America's foremost actresses, Miss Joan Crawford.

JOAN
(gracious, movie star voice)
We are very happy to have you with us. This is my daughter, Christina.

CHRISTINA
Hello, everybody.

JOAN
And my son, Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER
Hi.

INTERVIEWER
Who decorated this beautiful tree in the corner?

CHRISTOPHER AND CHRISTINA
(sounding like the perfect American family)
We all did!

INTERVIEWER
What time do you expect your youngsters will awaken tomorrow morning?

JOAN
(indulgent)
I'm afraid they are likely to be up by six-thirty at the latest.

INTERVIEWER
Will they come straight into your room and awaken you?

JOAN
I'd be disappointed if they didn't -- Christmas is our favorite day of the year.

INTERVIEWER
Christina, do you and your brother send lots of presents at Christmas time?

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA
(reading from
pages)
Yes, we do. But besides giving to our friends, we like to send presents every year to boys and girls across the ocean.

INTERVIEWER
Christopher, what do you want most from old Saint Nick tomorrow morning?

CHRISTOPHER
(reading his
pages)
A pair of Hopalong Cassidy guns.

INTERVIEWER
Miss Crawford, could you tell us what you would call your most exciting Christmas?

JOAN
I think the happiest moment of my life was the first Christmas the children came into my life. I don't see how Christmas can be enjoyed without children around.

INTERVIEWER
Suppose you tell us what's going to happen after we leave you.

JOAN
Well, the children and I will probably just watch the Christmas tree lights for a while. Then, later, we'll welcome some of the children's friends, who'll be in to help us sing some carols.

INTERVIEWER
And then surely you finish up by reading, 'Twas The Night Before Christmas'?

JOAN
Oh, no Christmas Eve would be complete without that.

CONTINUED:

INTERVIEWER
Well, as a Christmas present to our listeners, would all of you like to say the last two lines of that for us?

JOAN, CHRISTOPHER, AND CHRISTINA
(together)
'And I heard him exclaim as he drove
out of sight,
Merry Christmas to all, and to all a
good night.'

INTERVIEWER
And good night to you, Miss Crawford, and thank you for allowing us to share your Christmas Eve.

JOAN
Thank you. And a very merry Christmas to you and all of your listeners.

And, by God, there is so much warmth in Joan's voice as she speaks her last lines that, at that moment, we believe she means it.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Christina is awakened by the SOUND of angry VOICES coming from Joan's bedroom. The voices belong to Joan and Jake. The argument grows louder. We HEAR the SOUNDS of a SCUFFLE and a SLAP. Joan cries out, and something SHATTERS on the floor. Christina runs to her door and opens it an inch or two, peering toward her mother's bedroom door.

CHRISTINA'S POV

We SEE Jake, who has obviously been drinking, exit from Joan's bedroom and slam the door behind him. Immediately, it is locked from the other side. Jake starts down the hall, changes his mind, and goes back to the door, trying the handle.

JAKE
Joan? Let me in.

JOAN (O.S.)
Get out of my house, loser!

Enraged, Jake kicks at the door repeatedly.

CONTINUED:

The door is strong, but it gives on the fourth kick and he goes through the ruined door. Christina leaves her room and follows him into Joan's room.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joan isn't there, but a window is open. Jake leans out the window and tries to grab at Joan.

CUT TO:

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Joan, wearing only a nightgown, is perched precariously on a small balcony, just out of Jake's reach.

JAKE
Joan, for the love of God...

JOAN
(venomous)
Get out! You think I need you? I don't need you -- I want a man, all I have to do is walk down the street! Hell, they love me -- I'm frigging Joan Crawford!

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jake pulls his head back inside, and starts to leave, passing Christina.

JAKE
(muttering)
Crazy, crazy, vindictive, crazy.

Christina calls to him as he goes out the door; her voice firm, even.

CHRISTINA
Don't ever come back, Jake.

He pauses, surprised, looks at Christina, then exits.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Joan now has on a robe and holds an ice pack to her face.

(CONTINUED)

I
Why does she
turn on him
He never
[illegible]
[illegible]
friend
[illegible]
new
page
little
too flat.
its
definition
It would

CONTINUED:

She looks a bit chastened by the experience.

JOAN
Poor Jake. It was half my fault.
I'll call him tomorrow and apologize.
You'll have to apologize, for
yelling at Uncle Jake.

CHRISTINA
(not rude, not
defiant; just
factual)
No.

JOAN
What?

CHRISTINA
I won't apologize. You can
certainly have him back, but I
won't apologize, and I won't call
him or anybody else 'uncle' anymore.
(a beat)
No.

The two look at each other for a moment, then Christina walks out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. BREAKFAST ROOM - DAY

Joan and Ada are at work: Joan signs a stack of glossy photographs of herself, and Ada slips them into envelopes. FOOTSTEPS are heard coming down the back stairs.

JOAN
(sighing)
Here comes the thundering herd.

Christina appears in the doorway, a huge basket of laundry in her arms.

JOAN
(continuing)
Darling, could you possibly tread
more lightly on those delicate
feet of yours?

CHRISTINA
Okay, okay.

(CONTINUED)

JOAN
Okay, okay?

CHRISTINA
(a sigh)
Yes, Mommie Dearest.

CUT TO:

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

As Christina is loading the washing machine, Joan appears behind her. Something is on Joan's mind, but she hesitates, absent-mindedly folding a few towels from a pile of clean laundry. Then:

JOAN
Honey? I've got something to tell you. You know those pedal pushers you wanted? I can't afford to buy them -- I got word this morning: I lost my contract with Warners.

For the first time, we see Joan weep. She sits down on a bench, covers her face with one hand, and weeps.

CHRISTINA
(moved)
Oh, don't cry.

JOAN
After twenty-seven years I'm all on my own -- no studio, no contract, no money, no husband. Ada's doing all the cooking, and Jake won't even talk to me on the phone.
(a beat)
Jesus, I'm so scared.

CHRISTINA
Can I do anything?

JOAN
(dries her eyes)
Well, I've already talked to your school about your tuition -- I just can't afford it any more, so the Chadwicks said you can work your way through, and pay for your tuition that way.

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA
(she means it)
That's okay. I don't care.

JOAN
(defensive)
I scrubbed floors to get through school -- it'll do you good. You can learn the value of money.
(starts to cry again)
What the hell am I going to do?

CHRISTINA
(sits beside her)
Sh-h. It'll be okay. Sh-h.

JOAN
I did want to buy you those pedal pushers, though...

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Christina and Ada are finishing the dishes when, from upstairs, the faraway SOUND of something heavy falling is heard. Christina looks at Ada, then starts out of the room.

ADA
(too quickly)
No, I'll go.

Christina is puzzled, but Ada insists on going by herself.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ada is vainly trying to lift Joan's inert body off the floor and onto the bed when Christina enters. She sees her mother and runs to kneel beside her.

CHRISTINA
My God!

ADA
It's okay.

CHRISTINA
What's wrong?

CONTINUED:

ADA
She's just... sick.

CHRISTINA
Shall I call a doctor?

ADA
No, don't.

Christina looks at her mother again, then heads for the telephone.

ADA
(continuing)
She's drunk, Christina.

Dumbfounded, Christina turns to Ada.

ADA
(continuing; a lie)
She's worried: She thinks she might have a chance at an oscar nomination this year, and she's worried.
(more truthful, when Christina continues to stare at her)
It happens sometimes -- not too often.

CHRISTINA
(horrified)
How often?

ADA
Help me get her on the bed.

Christina helps, and the two lift Joan up.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Joan lies on the bed, covered with a blanket. Christina sits beside her, holding her hand. Joan mutters fretfully in her sleep and pulls the hand away.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Holding a robe that she and Ada have taken off Joan, Christina moves to Joan's closet. She slides back the doors, the automatic light flicks on, and we SEE the inside of the closet -- absolutely incredible.

CONTINUED:

Every conceivable color of dress hangs neatly on its padded hanger, and no article of clothing touches another. All are hung with military precision.

Below the dresses are shoe racks containing close to three hundred pairs of shoes. They are arranged according to color: One row starts with white, then goes to beige, then brown, then black. Another row begins with the palest blue, graduating to Navy. Still another row starts with pink and goes to dark, true red.

Christina looks at the dresses, touches a particularly luxurious fur coat, then quickly leaves the closet.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S DEN - NIGHT

A foot-high bank made in the shape of a liquor bottle sits beside the bar. Christina enters, a table knife in her hand.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

The bank is on its side. Christina lies on the floor beside it, easing coins out the top with the help of the knife blade. A small mound of quarters and silver dollars lies beside her. She smiles with satisfaction as a five dollar bill comes out with several more coins.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Dressed in the nightgown we last saw her in, Joan is awakened by a prolonged HONKING NOISE. Furious, she moves to her window, where she sees Jake who sits in his convertible, grinning and leaning on his horn. Joan makes a frantic pass at her hair with a brush, then runs downstairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF JOAN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Joan rushes out to the car, gets in, and the two kiss.

JOAN
(out of breath)
Oh, it's so good to see you!
(she hugs him)
Make me laugh or make me mad or
make me come -- anything.
(a beat; she hugs him
again; heartfelt)
Make me laugh.

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL STORE - DAY

The store is in a small business area near the Chadwick School. Janice and Vera watch admiringly as Christina comes out of a dressing room wearing a pair of pedal pushers.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHADWICK RIDING STABLES - DAY

Christina, Janice, and Vera gallop their horses out of a riding path and into the stable. Christina, wearing her pedal pushers, dismounts and hands the reins to TONY, a pleasant-looking boy who works at the stables. He is Vera's boy friend, but just now he is interested in Christina. As he unsaddles the horse:

TONY
(so Vera won't
hear)
Wanna meet me here tonight?

CHRISTINA
(glancing at Vera)
Why?

TONY
We could go for a walk.

CHRISTINA
What about Vera?

TONY
(he shrugs)
You want to or not?

CHRISTINA
But *why*?

TONY
Jesus, I have to have a reason? Because you're pretty. That good enough?

The words "because you're pretty" do it. Christina nods her head, and again glances at Vera, who is now watching them closely.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dressed with unusual care, Christina leaves the room with an attempt at casualness. Vera watches her.

CUT TO:

EXT. STABLES - NIGHT

The moon is over half-full, and, FROM A DISTANCE, we CLEARLY SEE Tony and Christina as they walk slowly away from the stables.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRASSY SPOT NEAR HORSE CORRAL

Christina and Tony sit side by side in silence. Then he kisses her lightly on the mouth.

TONY
You're so pretty.

CHRISTINA
*Am* I?

He kisses her again, a bit more seriously. She is so starved for affection of any kind that her arms go around him and she kisses him back.

CHRISTINA
(continuing)
Am I really?

Tony makes an affirmative sound and gently pulls her down with him. His hands start to roam over her body, and he slowly moves to lie on top of her. Christina doesn't really seem to notice. Her eyes fill with tears, and, as he touches her, she repeats the question over and over:

CHRISTINA
(continuing)
Am I really pretty? Not just my
hair, I mean, but *me*? Am I really...

Suddenly she cries out in pain and pushes him away.

TONY
(disappointed)
Brand new, aren't you?

Christina's tears are from embarrassment now, as she pushes her dress down and straightens her blouse.

TONY
(continuing)
Oh, don't worry. Nothing happened.
You've got everything you came with. ] wonderful unfortunate – experience?

Christina cries harder. Tony kneels down to comfort her. Then both of them jump wildly as a VOICE speaks nearby:

CONTINUED:

VERA
Pretty.
(a beat)
This is real pretty.

TONY
(to Vera)
Nothing happened.

VERA
(to Christina;
vicious)
I'm going to tell. I am.
(starts away)
I'm going to tell.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

The dressing room is much smaller than the one we saw at Metro, but it is still more than adequate. Joan is with Ada, but her eyes are glued to a small television set. A newscaster finishes a piece about Eisenhower, then lightens his tone:

NEWSCASTER
On the local scene, today is the
big day for a favored few of
Hollywood's own...
(Joan leans forward)
... as the Academy Award nominations
were announced. Best picture
nominations are 'High Noon,' 'The
Greatest Show On Earth,' 'Ivanhoe,'
(Joan groans in
impatience)
'The Quiet Man,' and 'Moulin Rouge.'
(a beat)
Best actress nods went to Julie
Harris for 'Member Of The Wedding,'
Susan Hayward for 'With a Song In My
Heart,' Joan Crawford for 'Sudden
Fear,' Shirley Booth for 'Come Back...'

Joan snaps off the television set and Ada begins to weep with joy. Immediately, her telephone begins to RING, but Joan ignores it. She nods her head slightly, and makes a fist-clenched-one-thumb-up gesture that says, "I did it. I pulled it off one more time."

CUT TO:

EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

Joan strides across the lot, smiling and waving to the PASSERS-BY who call out congratulations to her.

CUT TO:

INT. MRS. CHADWICK'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joan, Mrs. Chadwick, and Christina sit in a tense, unhappy group.

JOAN
(furious, but
trying for
composure)
Unbelievable. This whole thing is just unbelievable. What kind of school is this, anyway?

MRS. CHADWICK
(a bit sharp)
A good one.
(more calm)
Miss Crawford, we're all concerned about Christina, but a doctor examined her, and he assures us that Christina was telling the truth: Nothing happened -- she's still a virgin.

CHRISTINA
(to Joan)
I promise you...

JOAN
(interrupting; not
looking at Christina)
I don't talk to whores.

MRS. CHADWICK
(shocked)
Oh, Miss Crawford, really! Talk like that... we don't want a scandal.

JOAN
(subdued)
No. No, of course.

MRS. CHADWICK
Our main concern is for the school.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CHADWICK (CONT'D)
The boy is to be expelled, but Christina may stay.
(a beat)
However. My husband and I think it would be best if she moved out of her room and into our home for the rest of her time here.
(Christina nods her agreement)
In addition to her regular work schedule, as a punishment, Christina will have to do one hundred hours of work time after school, on weekends, and during mid-semester break.
(to Christina)
Does that seem fair to you?

CHRISTINA
(she means it)
Yes.

MRS. CHADWICK
It won't be easy for you. The whole school is talking.

CHRISTINA
I didn't do anything -- I'm not running away.

Joan is eager to be gone. She gathers her purse and gloves and stands up.

JOAN
(to Mrs. Chadwick her fancy diction creeping back in)
Whatever you and your husband have decided is fine with me. I am deeply ashamed of this whole incident, but I thank you for your understanding and patience. I want it understood, though, that Christina is to have no male visitors while she's under your roof. None.

MRS. CHADWICK
It's settled, then.
(to Christina)
I'll be in my office.

CONTINUED:

She exits. As soon as she's gone, Joan, without glancing at Christina, heads through another door.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Joan walks quickly toward her car. Ten feet behind, Christina follows.

CHRISTINA
If you'd just listen...

JOAN
(not looking back; no
trace of the movie
star diction)
I don't talk to whores.

Christina stops. Joan gets in her car and starts the motor.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Christina, dressed differently, is on her hands and knees, weeding a flower garden. As she works, she talks to Janice, who stands next to her. Then a group of six boys and girls walk by: Vera is among them. She motions toward Christina, says something, then laughs loudly. The group joins her in laughter.

JANICE
(angry; calling
to Vera)
Give the world a break, Vera, and
shut the hell up!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL - DAY

Books in her arms, Christina walks by four boys on her way to class. The boys elbow each other and laugh salaciously. One boy in particular, EDDIE CHAPMAN, carries on: he grabs his crotch with both hands and groans as if in erotic pain.

EDDIE
Oh-h-h-h! I'm dying! I want some
of that!

The other boys roar with laughter and punch each others' shoulders. Christina ignores them, but it's hard.

CUT TO:

CONTINUED:

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CUT TO:

INT. MRS. CHADWICK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

MRS. CHADWICK
(on the telephone)
... Yes, excellent work for the past month. Her grades are all A's and B's, and she's a pleasure around the house. My husband and I are always pleased when we can give such good progress reports to parents.
(she listens, nodding her head, then begins to look puzzled)
Well, that is a thorough report on Christina.
(listens again)
No, she's been in no trouble whatsoever.
(again she listens)
Well, Miss Crawford, I don't know what to say to you.
(a beat)
Let me see... the only time I've even had to speak to her... one day last week when it was chilly she wore her coat to class.
(listens)
No, it wasn't serious. We just prefer the students to wear sweaters in class.
(listens, then frowns)
Oh, Miss Crawford, surely you don't mean that.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - LATE AFTERNOON

Christina and Janice walk side by side. Christina is white-faced with rage.

JANICE
(unbelieving)
... you mean someone just took all your clothes but that dress you've got on?

CHRISTINA
And my coat. They left my coat. She said if I wanted to wear it, I could wear it all the time. I have to wash and iron this dress every night.

JANICE
You can borrow some of mine -- I've got plenty for both of us.

CHRISTINA
She'd know.

CONTINUED:

JANICE
How, for heaven's sakes?

CHRISTINA
(loud)
She'd know! She'd find out!

JANICE
She's not God, Christina.

CHRISTINA
(bitter)
Yes, she is. She can do anything she wants to.
(more bitter)
Oh, damn her. Damn her. Damn her!

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SHORT SCENES. WE SEE

A) Christina standing in the school cafeteria, wearing the dress from the previous scene.

B) Christina raking leaves from the Chadwick lawn, late in the day. She wears a coat over the dress.

C) Christina sitting in class, her mind elsewhere. The dress begins to look faded.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHADWICK SCHOOL - DAY

Clusters of boys and girls stand outside a classroom. Christina and Janice start up the steps as one of the groups of boys, who stand near a lily pond, start to torment Christina with low whistles, etc. Eddie Chapman, the boy who yelled at Christina before, closes his eyes, spreads his arms wide, and says:

EDDIE
(to Christina)
Help me, oh, help me! Show me how the movie stars do it!

In a flash, Christina turns on him. Dropping her books, holding her arms out straight, she slams into Eddie with all her strength. She catches him while his eyes are still closed, and he falls ass-over-teakettle into the lily pond.

All the students laugh at Eddie, who does look ridiculous sitting chest-deep in water. Eventually he laughs, too. Then, finally, Christina joins in the laughter.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CHADWICK HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The day is very windy, and Christina wearing her coat, is hanging wet sheets on a clothesline. Then she stiffens as she sees Janice and Eddie Chapman approaching. Janice stops out of hearing distance, leaving Eddie to approach Christina alone.

EDDIE
(tentative)
Hi.

CHRISTINA
(the same)
Hi.

EDDIE
(quickly; a
memorized speech)
Listen, I, Janice says I owe you
an apology, and I guess she's
right, so I'm sorry for the way
I acted.
(a beat)
I mean it.

CHRISTINA
(pause; wry smile)
That's the first time anybody's
ever apologized to me in my whole
life.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

FROM A DISTANCE, we SEE Janice and Eddie helping Christina manage the wildly flapping sheets.

CUT TO:

INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

A huge sign across the gym proclaims "SPRING SOCK HOP." A RECORD PLAYER BLASTS OUT "Rockin' Robin," and we SEE Christina, still in her faded dress, dancing with a boy we haven't seen before. She is having a fine time.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Christina is dancing another fast dance, this time with Eddie.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHADWICK SCHOOL GROUNDS - NIGHT

Janice and a boy walk hand in hand. A few feet behind them are Christina and Eddie. The four talk excitedly about the dance, etc.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CHADWICK HOUSE - NIGHT

Janice and the boy wait while Eddie takes Christina to the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CHADWICK ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Mrs. Chadwick looks away from a television program as Christina and Eddie enter. She waves from the living room.

CHRISTINA
(to Mrs. Chadwick)
Eddie walked me back.

MRS. CHADWICK
(off-hand)
That's nice. How are you, Eddie?

EDDIE
Fine.

Mrs. Chadwick turns back to the television set. Christina thanks Eddie, and he leaves.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - NEXT DAY (EARLY EVENING)

Mrs. Chadwick stands in the living room, twisting her hands together in agitation as we HEAR two pairs of FOOTSTEPS coming down the stairs. Then Joan appears with an outraged Christina behind her. Though Joan is not drunk, she has had a few drinks, and they show: her speech is a bit thick, and her makeup is slightly smudged.

MRS. CHADWICK
Mrs. Crawford, the boy wasn't visiting Christina -- he just stepped inside the door. I don't know why I even mentioned it.
(to Christina)
She just kept asking me and *asking* me.

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA
(to Mrs. Chadwick;
a plea)
Tell her how it was...

JOAN
(to Christina)
Get to the car.

Christina exits.

JOAN
(continuing; to
Mrs. Chadwick)
Perhaps I can find another school
where my orders will be followed.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S CAR - EVENING

Joan drives the car; Ada sits next to her. Christina slumps in the back seat, angry. Joan points toward the glove compartment -- Ada opens it and takes out a pint bottle of vodka which is almost empty.

JOAN
Damn it!
(to Ada; purely
rhetorical)
Where's a liquor store around here?

CHRISTINA
If you turn right, there's one by
the supermarket.

Joan slams on the brakes, and the car SCREAMS to a halt, throwing Ada against the windshield. Joan whirls, aiming a clap at Christina, but Christina dodges, and only her arm is hit.

JOAN
(leaning over the
back seat)
You always know where to find the
boys and the booze, don't you.

CHRISTINA
(knowing she
should shut up)
Well, you asked...

JOAN
Not you. So shut up.

CONTINUED:

Christina is naturally angry at Joan, and she gives her words an ever-so-slight edge of irony, of rebellion.

CHRISTINA
Yes, Mommie Dearest.

Joan draws back her open hand, threatening.

JOAN
One word. Go ahead -- say it.
One more word. I dare you.

Christina is silent. Joan turns around, jams the gearshift into drive and SCREECHES away.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOAN'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Joan's car pulls to a quick stop.

JOAN
(to Ada)
Go fix me a drink.
(as an afterthought)
Please.

Ada leaves the car.

JOAN
(continuing)
Mary Bennett's here from New York to do a cover story on me for Redbook. She's in your room, so you sleep in the old servants' room, and I don't want any trouble from you, on any level.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S DEN - NIGHT

As Joan enters, MARY BENNETT looks up from the typewriter. She is approximately Joan's age, but looks at least ten years older: her figure is plump, and her hair, touched with gray, is fixed haphazardly.

MARY
(indicating typed pages)
You're going to love this, Joan.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MARY (CONT'D)
(she gestures a headline in the air)
Mature Woman Manages To Have It All -- Career, Home, and Family.

JOAN
(all smiles and affability)
Wonderful. Let me see.

As Joan picks up the typed pages and starts to read, Christina enters, and Mary reacts to her.

MARY
My God! Christina? It can't be. Last time I saw you, you were four.
(lays a hand on top of her head; mock dismay)
Oh, my poor old gray head!

CHRISTINA
How are you, Miss Bennett?

MARY
God, call me 'Mary.'

A beat: what else can you say to a fourteen year old you haven't seen for ten years?

MARY
(continuing)
How do you like school?

CHRISTINA (simultaneously) JOAN
Very much. She got expelled.

Dead silence. Mary looks puzzled, and Christina is open-mouthed with indignation.

CHRISTINA
I didn't.

JOAN
Don't lie.

CHRISTINA
(louder)
I didn't!

CONTINUED:

JOAN
(icy)
I want to talk to you in the other room, Christina.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joan strides through the door, closely followed by Christina. Joan leads the way into the den so they can't be heard.

CUT TO:

INT. DEN - NIGHT

As soon as both of them are in the room, Joan whirls to face her daughter. Joan is furious, but this time Christina is equally furious, and she stands face to face with Joan.

JOAN
(strong)
Why do you deliberately defy me?

CHRISTINA
(just as strong)
Why did you tell her I got expelled?

JOAN
(totally illogical)
You did get expelled.

CHRISTINA
(even)
That's a lie.

Joan slaps her across the face. Christina doesn't move -- doesn't dodge, doesn't cower, doesn't even blink: she just stands looking at her mother, and the look says, "I see you, and I know what you are." This is a confrontation, and for the first time we realize that Christina is looking eye to eye with her mother -- in fact, Christina is a bit taller than Joan.

Enraged by this new attitude, Joan slaps Christina again, harder.

JOAN
(a third slap, even harder; loud)
You love it, don't you? You just LOVE to make me hit you!

CONTINUED:

Mary Bennett appears in the doorway, her face shocked at what's going on. Joan turns to her, almost rude.

JOAN
(continuing)
Mary, you know how to get to your room. If you need anything, ask Ada.

Mary nods and leaves. Joan begins to pace the room.

JOAN
(continuing)
This is wonderful, ab-so-lutely wonderful... you embarrass me in front of a reporter, and you...

CHRISTINA
(calm)
Why did you adopt me?

JOAN
(taken aback)
What? Because I wanted someone to love...
(movie star diction)
... because I wanted to open my home to unfortunate children.

CHRISTINA
Oh, don't act for me. And for heaven's sake don't kiss your thumb at me, either. I want to know: why did you adopt me?

JOAN
(vicious)
Right now, I wish to Christ I hadn't.

CHRISTINA
You didn't answer my question.

JOAN
(trying to wound)
I did it to save my figure!
(quick; she means it)
Oh, that's not true. Really, it's not true.

CHRISTINA
But maybe just a little true?

that doesn't quite answer it. Maybe - [illegible] She needs to tie together wanting someone to love, without risking her figure

CONTINUED:

JOAN
(looks up to the ceiling; a helpless gesture)
Well, I give up -- I don't know what to do with you.

CHRISTINA
Why not?
(she parrots the old line Joan has said so many times)
After all, you're the mother, and I'm only the child.

Joan's head snaps around in anger, and she moves nearer to Christina.

JOAN
I don't ask much from you, girl. Why can't you give me the simple respect I'm used to? Why can't you treat me the way I'd get treated by any stranger on the street?

CHRISTINA
(strongest so far)
Because I'm not one of your fans!

Joan's entire body recoils for a moment, then she lunges forward, her face murderous. She grabs Christina by the throat, and they both go down, knocking over a lamp and a small table as they fall. The shade rolls off the lamp as it hits the floor, and the scene is lit with a weird, bright light from the naked bulb.

Joan is completely out of control -- she sits on top of Christina, pressing her thumbs deeper into her throat.

JOAN
BASTARD! Damn you! BASTARD!

Christina tries to fight back, to get away, but she is no match for Joan, and it is clear that Christina is in great danger. Finally, Christina twists out from under her mother, wedges her knee between Joan's body and her own, and pushes Joan away, loosening her grip.

Joan releases one hand and hits Christina backhand across the mouth, cutting her lip with a large ring.

CONTINUED:

JOAN
(continuing)
Ungrateful BASTARD!

The door bursts open and Ada rushes in.

ADA
(pulling at Joan)
My God! Joan! You'll kill her!
Stop it!

But Joan won't let go. Finally Ada gives a tremendous pull, and drags her away. Joan's screaming turns to weeping that is touched with hysteria.

ADA
(continuing; sharp)
Oh, stop it, Joan -- Christina's
hurt.

Ada checks Christina to see if she is all right, then helps the bruised and bleeding girl to a chair. Christina rubs her throat, then gingerly touches her cut lips. When Joan speaks, she is again in total command of herself.

JOAN
(to Christina)
Go upstairs to the old servants'
room. Someone will be along
shortly to lock you in.
(when Christina
doesn't move
immediately)
Now, please.

Christina stands up, looking at Joan with real hate. Joan merely turns her back.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD SERVANTS' ROOM - NIGHT

The room is now used for storage. Old suitcases and boxes are piled on the bed and the other few pieces of furniture. Christina enters, removes the boxes from the bed and lies down painfully. From the other side of the door, we HEAR the SOUND of a KEY BEING TURNED in the lock. Only then does Christina begin to sob.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Joan, dishevelled from her fight with Christina, sits at her vanity table, repairing her makeup and hair.

CONTINUED:

Ada straightens the room, her face showing her disapproval of Joan. Joan sees this in the mirror and turns to Ada.

JOAN
(using all her charm)
Ada, don't be mad. I've had so many worries lately -- the scripts just get worse and worse, and I've got money troubles, and Christina's just impossible any more.

Ada doesn't buy it.

JOAN
(continuing;
working hard)
You don't know what she said to me -- the names she called me. I just can't handle her.

Ada doesn't buy it.

JOAN
(continuing; she
sees it's not
working, and
moves to Ada)
If you desert me, I'll be all alone. Please understand. Please be my friend.
(Joan gently
kisses her thumb
and touches it
to Ada's cheek)
Please?

Ada buys it. The two women hug.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Joan sits talking with OFFICER COLEMAN, a man from the Juvenile Division. He is in his forties, and looks weary.

JOAN
... I don't know what else to do with her. I'm taking her out of the Chadwick School and putting her in a Catholic school -- a strict Catholic school, and she can just stay there till she's eighteen.
(MORE)

JOAN (CONT'D)
(a beat)
She's been nothing but trouble for me: she's incorrigible -- she brings nothing but lies and unhappiness into this house!
(a beat)
If you can't talk some sense into her -- if she won't agree to behave at this new school -- I want you to just...
(a pause; she searches)
... take her.

Ada brings Christina into the room on Joan's last two words.

JOAN
(continuing; as though introducing a guest)
Christina, this is Mr. Coleman. He's a juvenile officer.

Christina looks like hell: her face is bruised, her lower lip has dried blood on it, and her dress is rumpled.

OFFICER COLEMAN
Could I speak to Christina alone?

JOAN
(Queen of England)
Of course.

Joan exits and Christina sits down.

OFFICER COLEMAN
She beat you up, didn't she?

Christina nods.

OFFICER COLEMAN
(continuing)
Well, I heard her version, let's hear yours.

CHRISTINA
We had an argument. She told a friend of hers a lie about me. I told her it was a lie and asked her why she said it. She slapped me, and I asked her why she ever adopted me in the first place.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)
She said I should treat her like the rest of the world does, and I said I wasn't just one of her fans.
(a beat)
Then she tried to kill me. I think she might have if her secretary hadn't stopped her.

OFFICER COLEMAN
(not happy with what he has to say)
Christina, there's nothing I can do to help you. You're going to have to get along better with your mother.
(a beat)
Under current law, if she calls again, I'll have to take you down to juvenile hall and book you as an incorrigible. You could wind up in a detention school.

Christina gasps.

OFFICER COLEMAN
(continuing)
Do you understand?

Christina fights back her impulse to cry, and looks directly at the man.

OFFICER COLEMAN
(continuing; more kindly)
Kid, she's got you by the short ones.

CHRISTINA
(bitter)
Right.

OFFICER COLEMAN
You're going to have to hang in and do what she says.

CHRISTINA
(as above)
Right.

OFFICER COLEMAN
And, after all, she is your mother.

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA
(as above)
Right.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - LATER

All graciousness, Joan is showing Coleman out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Joan returns from the front door and walks just inside the room, where Christina sits as we last saw her. Joan puts her hand on the knob of the living room door. Christina turns her head and mother and daughter look at one another for three full beats. Then:

JOAN
(calm; cool)
You lose.
(as she leaves the room and pulls the door shut behind her)
Goodbye, Christina.

As Christina stares at the closed door, suddenly we HEAR the wild, churning BEAT of Janis Joplin's "Take A Little Piece Of My Heart." As the VOLUME INCREASES, the CAMERA HOLDS on Christina for a few moments, then:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AERIAL SHOT OF NEW YORK CITY - DAY

It is 1970. The MUSIC GROWS EVEN LOUDER as the CAMERA ESTABLISHES New York.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLOOMINGDALE'S - DAY

Joan Crawford exits the store and walks the half-block to where her limousine and driver are waiting. Incredibly, Janice Joplin's VOICE GROWS EVEN LOUDER as Joan walks, and, around her, we SEE obvious evidence that we are in 1970: wildly-dressed hippies line the street -- boys with shoulder-length hair and multi-color shirts stand with their arms around micro-miniskirted girls wearing outlandish makeup.

CONTINUED:

Joan is sixty-four, but that fact is difficult to believe: she looks closer to fifty-four -- her hair is a lighter shade, her body is trim, and she still walks with her usual, perfect posture.

CUT TO:

EXT. LARGE APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Joan's limousine pulls up in front of the building and Joan gets out.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY

Joan walks down the spacious corridor, stopping at her own door. As she enters, so does the CAMERA, and we:

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

And what an apartment it is: sixteen normal-sized rooms have been converted to eight huge ones, and the view of New York from the windows is stupendous. Potentially beautiful, the place seems sterile and unlived in -- white wall-to-wall carpets are everywhere, and clear plastic slipcovers have been placed over all the sofas and chairs. Even the flowers are plastic.

Over the mantel is a large painting of Joan's last husband, Alfred Steele. As Joan enters, a tiny white poodle greets her frantically, licking her shoes and rolling over on its back to be petted.

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joan quickly changes clothes and is freshening her makeup as the DOORBELL RINGS.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S DOOR - DAY

Joan's maid opens the door to admit WALLACE FRANKLIN.

FRANKLIN

I'm Wallace Franklin -- from the Times?

The maid shows him into the living room.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joan has finished working on herself. She stands in front of a full-length, three-way mirror, surveying herself. She straightens almost imperceptibly and smiles graciously at her three reflections.

JOAN
(a rehearsal;
her movie-star
diction)
How do you do? I'm Joan Crawford.

She tries another kind of smile and extends her right hand as if to shake hands with someone.

JOAN
(continuing;
hearty, one-of-
the-gang)
Hi. Joan Crawford.

Joan pours herself a small amount of vodka into a glass, tosses it down, and heads for the door.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joan enters, the reporter rises, and Joan greets him with the second, more friendly greeting.

CUT TO:

EXT. PEPSI-COLA BOTTLING PLANT - MORNING

Joan cuts a ribbon in celebration of the opening of this particular bottling plant. Eight or ten photographers take pictures, Pepsi-Cola executives beam, and fans yell from a roped-off area.

While we SEE this, we HEAR:

FRANKLIN (V.O.)
(going on with
his interview)
You are now appearing less frequently in movies. Is that by your own choice?

JOAN (V.O.)
I'm always looking for a good role. Meanwhile, I'm busy with my work for Pepsi Cola.

(CONTINUED)

not necc. [illegible] [illegible] before leaving + [illegible] Pepsi-Cola stuff & [illegible] [illegible] + TV

We're told what it is after we've seen it — + told in future tense. same with TV shows. it will allow for another one.

this is awkward. it suggests an old interview by a biographer. How about the time [illegible] [illegible]

CONTINUED:

FRANKLIN (V.O.)
Your late husband was an executive with that company for many years. When he died, was it his wish that you sort of carry on his work?

JOAN (V.O.)
Yes, indeed. Alfred would have been very happy to know that I have an active part in the work that was so important to him -- and I enjoy it. Next week, for instance, I'm officiating at the opening of one of our new bottling plants in New Jersey.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Joan is one in a series of "Legendary Ladies" chosen to be honored: she stands alone on the stage as the audience rises to give her an ovation. Roses and daffodils are thrown at her feet. she loves it, and acts as if she's surprised that all these people are honoring her.

As we SEE this, we HEAR:

FRANKLIN (V.O.)
(continuing his interview)
Do you think you'll ever marry again?

JOAN (V.O.)
Oh, no! I get more than enough love from the people who've loved my movies -- from the fans.

FRANKLIN (V.O.)
And from your children, of course.

JOAN (V.O.)
(quickly)
Of course.

FRANKLIN (V.O.)
You're being honored at Town Hall next month in a series called 'Legendary Ladies.' How does that make you feel?
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

FRANKLIN (V.O.)(CONT'D)
Do you feel like a show business legend?

JOAN (V.O.)
No. I feel like a woman who's lasted longer than most.

FRANKLIN (V.O.)
And how did you manage to do that?

JOAN (V.O.)
I dug my fingernails in. I dug my fingernails in and hung on.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL ARRIVAL AREA - DAY

Joan steps out of a limousine and is greeted by two hotel employees, who usher her into the lobby with great ceremony.

CUT TO:

INT. TELEVISION SOUND STAGE - DAY

Joan is shooting a one-hour television movie. She and a hairdresser stand off to the side: he is putting the final touches to her hair, which is fixed in a chignon. The director motions for her, and she moves into the lights as if they were her home -- her head held up, her breasts high.

CUT TO:

INT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Joan is dressed in a simple cotton shift; her hair is styled as in the previous scene. She stands at the window looking out on the palm trees and the eternal sunshine that let us know we are still in California.

A large arrangement of flowers sits on a table near the window. Taped to the vase is a large, hand-printed message reading, "JOAN -- THANKS FOR A WONDERFUL WEEK, FROM ALL OF US." Joan holds a bottle of vodka in one hand and a drink in the other. The filming is over, and she looks sad.

While we SEE these three scenes of her arriving, shooting the television movie, and standing in the hotel, we HEAR:

CONTINUED:

FRANKLIN (V.O.)
(going on with his interview)
And after that -- what's next for you?

JOAN (V.O.)
Well, I have a busy schedule -- my correspondence alone is a full time job.

FRANKLIN (V.O.)
Do you look forward to being a grandmother?

JOAN (V.O.)
(evading his question)
Well, but I look forward to so many things: two months from now, in the spring, for instance, I'm doing a one-hour television program -- one of those scary things that are so popular these days.

FRANKLIN (V.O.)
And after that?

JOAN (V.O.)
Well...

FRANKLIN (V.O.)
I mean, do you have any movies lined up?

JOAN (V.O.)
(it's a lie)
I have a very full life, Mr. Franklin.
(a beat)
Very full.

We HEAR Franklin thank Joan for the interview, and the SOUNDS of her letting him out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Joan, her hair fixed as it was in the Beverly Hills hotel, flies back to New York. She looks let down, depressed.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Joan enters, dressed as she was on the airplane, and is greeted by her frantic little poodle. She is happy to see the dog, but it is clear that she is saddened because the shooting is over.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Without makeup, and wearing another cotton wrapper, Joan lies in bed watching an afternoon news program. As she pours herself a drink with a slightly unsteady hand, her attention is caught by the NEWSCASTER.

NEWSCASTER
In Hollywood today, a park was renamed Mayer Park, honoring Louis B. Mayer, the famed producer who headed M.G.M. studios for so many years. Some twenty people showed up for the ceremonies today, which is the thirteenth anniversary of the film pioneer's death.

Joan jumps out of bed and rushes to the window, opening it. She sticks her head out the window and yells to the sky:

JOAN
(full voice)
Hey, Louis B. Mayer! I'm still here -- you're worm bait, and I'm still here!

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - NIGHT

Joan watches more televsion, drinks more.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - DAY

Again more television, more vodka.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - NIGHT

The television blares away, nnoticed. Suddenly Joan gets out of bed and walks quickly into the living room.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joan opens a closet door, rummages around, and pulls out an old, 78-speed record. She walks to the elaborate stereo, switches the speed to 78, and starts the record.

It is the old song, "My Wonderful One," which she played earlier. As she told Christina, it reminds her of the time when she was happiest, and, as the music starts to play, Joan slowly, unsteadily sits down on the rug. She stares into space, listening. Her eyes fill with tears.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - NOON

Joan wears makeup and looks totally sober. She dials a number on the telephone.

JOAN
(a bit awkward)
Christina? It's, ah, Mommie.
How are you?
(she listens;
then)
I'm bored to frigging death.
Let's have lunch.
(a beat)
Oh, good! And let's go some place
fancy -- I'll pay. How does The
Four Seasons sound to you?
(a beat)
Doesn't it? Wonderful, then --
I'll see you at one o'clock.

CUT TO:

INT. FOUR SEASONS - DAY

Joan is already seated when the headwaiter leads Christina to the table. As she walks across the restaurant we again SEE the adult Christina whom we saw in the funeral scene. She is wearing a dark, beautifully cut dress that makes Joan's outfit look a bit overdone. Joan rises and the two women kiss the air near each other's cheeks. Both of them are a little stiff.

JOAN
Well, you look wonderful.

CHRISTIAN
So do you. Always.

JOAN
(rueful)
It gets harder and harder.

CONTINUED:

A silence falls between them.

JOAN
(continuing;
brightly)
So. What have you been up to? It's been weeks and weeks since I've seen you.

CHRISTINA
(smiles)
Months and months.

JOAN
(evading that)
Pepsi's trying to dump me. If they do, I'll be strapped for money -- that TV show I did was the first offer I've had in over a year.
(a beat)
You still working as a receptionist in that restaurant?

CHRISTINA
(laughs)
I was a cashier, Mother, and no, I'm not working there any more. That was two years ago. I've been in two plays since then, and you saw both of them -- remember?

JOAN
Oh, of course.

CHRISTINA
(more serious)
I got another acting job this week.

JOAN
You're still really serious about acting?

CHRISTINA
Yes, I am. I thought for a long time about going back to school, but I don't know... I still want to try.

JOAN
(not pleased, but
trying to hide the fact)
Well, good for you!
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOAN (CONT'D)
Though I do wish I could talk you into doing something else. Acting is so damn hard -- it's not worth what they put you through.
(envious)
What kind of part is it?

CHRISTINA
It's a daytime program -- 'Secret Storm.' They say my part will probably run for six months at least.

JOAN
(very envious)
How wonderful for you.

Joan looks at Christina for a moment, and her attitude changes. She leans across the table and takes Christina's hand.

JOAN
(continuing; honest)
Really, I mean it -- how wonderful for you.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Both Joan and Christina are more relaxed. Between them, they have finished a bottle of wine, and are enjoying each other's company tremendously. Joan is laughing so hard that she wipes tears from her eyes.

CHRISTINA
It's true! God, actors are the worst in bed.

JOAN
Well, let me give you some advice about actors...

CHRISTINA
What -- make 'em wear a rubber?

Joan laughs again, louder this time.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRANCE TO THE RESTAURANT - DAY

Joan and Christina are leaving. Both are even looser than in the previous scene.

CHRISTINA
(as they walk)
... so he said, 'I'd like to drag you into the bedroom and screw you about four times!' And I said, 'Yeah, but what am _I_ going to do all evening?'

Joan laughs so loudly this time that several heads turn.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK AVENUE - AFTERNOON

From a distance, we SEE Joan and Christina walking together. Their arms are loosely around each other's waists, and they are talking, communicating.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Joan and Christina stand by the window, looking at the beautiful night view of New York.

JOAN
I enjoyed today.

CHRISTINA
So did I.

JOAN
Let's do it more often.

The two women embrace, patting each other's backs with real affection. Joan pours herself a drink and moves to the sofa. Christina follows.

CHRISTINA
You think you'll ever marry again?

JOAN
No... I can't find anyone strong enough for me -- I never could.
(she shakes her head)
No man I ever married could ever stand toe to toe with me. Even Jake, and he's married now, anyway.

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA
Surely you could find someone
as strong as you are.

JOAN
No...

CHRISTINA
Well, surely someone.

JOAN
I don't think so.
(a beat; then
absolutely deadpan)
Maybe if Benito Mussolini were
alive...

Christina stares at Joan, shocked, then both women roar with laughter.

They touch each other's hands affectionately, and then they both grow more solemn, reflective.

CHRISTINA
Our lives could have been a lot
different, you know.

JOAN
I know.
(she pats Christina's
hand)
God, God, if I had my life to live
over, there are a lot of things
I'd do differently.

CHRISTINA
(thinks Joan is
apologizing)
Really? You would?

JOAN
(heartfelt)
Oh, yes.

Christina is deeply moved, and puts an arm around Joan's shoulder.

JOAN
(continuing)
Yeah, there were some rough years,
all right.

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA
(shy, but eager
to hear)
If you could go back and change
it, what would you do differently?

JOAN
Well, I'd have fought harder for
better scripts, for one thing --
especially after I went to Warner's.

Christina is shocked to realize that her mother is thinking only of her career. She takes her arm away from Joan.

JOAN
(continuing;
oblivious to
Christina's reaction)
I could have handled Jack Warner,
I know I could -- what I should
have done was...

As the CAMERA HOLDS ON Christina's disappointed face:

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joan is watching Christina perform in "Secret Storm." Given the rather banal writing, Christina is damn good -- an intense and exciting actress. We STAY ON the television screen long enough TO ESTABLISH Christina's character name and the faces of several other actors, then MOVE TO Joan's face.

The expression is an odd one -- pride in Christina's work and envy of Christina's having an acting job are equally reflected in Joan's face.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The apartment is small and modestly furnished, and the kitchen is nothing more than a small stove, sink, and refrigerator behind folding doors. As Christina cooks her dinner, she suddenly stops quickly, frowns, and touches her abdomen with the tips of her fingers.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Christina wakes up drenched with sweat, violently ill.

CONTINUED:

She barely manages to dial the telephone.

CHRISTINA
(into the phone)
Mother? I'm sick.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Joan and a WOMAN we saw acting on "Secret Storm" with Christina walk quickly down the hallway, following a DOCTOR who talks as rapidly as he walks.

DOCTOR
... a tumor on her fallopian
tubes -- we have to operate, and
we have to operate now.

quickly, maybe
for immediate S

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

Joan and the Woman stand up as the Doctor from the previous scene approaches.

DOCTOR
Good news. It's benign.

Joan and the Woman sink back down in relief.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

From a distance, we WATCH Joan and the Woman drink coffee from styrofoam cups. The Woman looks a bit puzzled. Joan is talking fast, working hard.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Joan enters, not bothering to turn on a light. Her poodle jumps up and down, unnoticed. Joan stands in the middle of the room for a moment; then, her face shining, Joan claps her hands together once, very hard.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

As the CAMERA MOVES DOWN the hallway, we HEAR an odd SOUND: it is a combination of weeping and wild laughter.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S ROOM - DAY

It is Christina who is making the noise. Several days have passed since the operation, but she is still white-faced and weak. Nonetheless, she rolls around on her bed, laughing/weeping as she holds both hands to her incision. We BECOME AWARE of the MURMUR of a television set. A NURSE stands near Christina's bed.

NURSE
Christina, stop it! What's the matter with you?
(a beat)
You had to have a substitute.

Christina laughs/cries even harder as the CAMERA MOVES UP TO REVEAL a television set tuned to "Secret Storm."

Joan is playing Christina's part.

We HOLD ON the set, showing Joan with actors we've seen when Christina was on the show. As we WATCH the screen, Joan's movements seem awkward, disjointed -- she's been drinking. As we HOLD on the screen, we HEAR:

NURSE
(continuing)
I think it's very generous of her.

CHRISTINA
(between whoops of tears/laughter)
She's... sixty four and she's... playing... a character who's... twenty eight...
(she laughs harder, edging toward hysteria)
Oh, God, yes! Oh, God, yes!... So generous...

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - JOAN'S NEW APARTMENT - EVENING

Several months have passed. Joan's new apartment, though perfectly respectable, is nothing compared to her other one: this one is the apartment of any upper-middle class woman.

Joan seems to have grown smaller, along with her apartment -- she seems thinner, almost frail, and her cotton shift hangs on her. Also, there is a dark bruise on her forehead.

CONTINUED:

A birthday party is in progress: Christina, who is completely recovered, and eight other guests are there. Joan sits in a chair, opening presents, as Christina enters from the kitchen, holding a cake with ten lighted candles.

JOAN
(dropping the presents;
genuinely touched)
Oh, Christina!

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joan and Christina do the dishes together. SOUNDS of CONVERSATION and LAUGHTER come from the living room.

JOAN
Do you really have to go to
California? Since Pepsi bounced
me, I'm at loose ends with
myself.
(charming)
You really have to go?

CHRISTINA
(nods)
It's not just a whim -- there are
so many more acting jobs in L.A.
(a beat)
I appreciate all those phone
calls you made for me: the contacts
will help.

JOAN
(after a pause)
You never did tell me how you
thought I was in 'Secret Storm.'

CHRISTINA
(looks at her
mother; pure
generosity)
I thought you were wonderful.

JOAN
(smiles, pleased)
Not as good as you.

Christina's head snaps around, shocked.

CONTINUED:

JOAN
(continuing)
Well, it's true. I was too old for the part, and besides, you're damned good.
(when she sees Christina's face)
Didn't I ever tell you that before?

CHRISTINA
No.

JOAN
Well, I tell you now. You're damned good.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OF JOAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The guests are leaving in a group, Christina among them. After goodbyes are said and Joan closes the door, Christina takes one elderly man aside as they walk toward the elevator. He is GORDON ADAMS, a doctor.

CHRISTINA
(low voice)
Did you see her forehead, Dr. Adams? She's fallen again. Can't you talk to her?

DR. ADAMS
Christina, your mother won't let me examine her.

CHRISTINA
(fierce)
She doesn't need an examination! She drinks and she falls down, and it worries me sick!

DR. ADAMS
(he stops)
Look at me.

Christina stops.

DR. ADAMS
(continuing)
Your mother will live exactly the way she wants to -- she always has, and she always will.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

DR. ADAMS (CONT'D)
(a beat)
God damn, the bond between you two is so strong! Let it go, a little, Christina. Loosen it.

He puts his arm around her, and they walk on.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

The apartment is almost bare. Two packed bags sit in the middle of the bare floor. Christina stands for a moment, looking at the empty room, says a silent goodbye, picks up her bags, and exits.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Christina is dressed as in the previous scene. She is fiddling with the knobs of the television set, trying for better reception. Joan sits on the sofa.

JOAN
(disappointed)
Oh, it doesn't matter -- it was almost over, anyway. The picture just comes and goes.

CHRISTINA
(moves to sit beside Joan)
But I loved that movie.

She has left the set on, though the picture is mostly black and white.

JOAN
Ask me who's going to miss you.

CHRISTINA
Who?

JOAN
I am. I miss you already, and you haven't even left.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Christina is ready to leave; both she and Joan are standing.

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA
(checking her watch)
Well, my plane leaves at...
(notices the television set)
Oh, look! The picture's back on.

On the television screen is the end of "Humoresque." The two watch as we SEE Joan walking into the ocean, intent on drowning herself.

CHRISTINA
(continuing)
Remember how I cried the first time I saw that picture? I thought you were really dead.

They watch a moment longer, then Joan takes Christina's arm, and they walk toward the door.

CUT TO:

INT. JOAN'S ENTRYWAY - EVENING

The two reach the door, stop, and look at each other.

JOAN
(as honest as she can be)
No matter what I felt like, I always loved you.
(a beat)
And I love you now.

Christina's eyes fill, and she kisses her mother on the mouth.

A SERIES OF SHORT SCENES

We SEE:

A) Christina arriving at Los Angeles Airport.

B) Christina buying an old car.

C) Christina re-arranging furniture in a standard, furnished-apartment-with-pool-for-two-hundred-dollars-a-month-type building.

D) Christina reading at an audition.

CONTINUED:

E) Christina having dinner with an attractive man, David Koontz, whom we saw with Christina at the funeral scene.

F) Christina talking with an impressive-looking studio executive.

G) Christina at another audition.

H) Christina and David walking through a small park, hand in hand. It is obvious that they like each other.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHRISTINA'S BUILDING - DAY

Christina's car tears into the parking space, and she leaps from the car and heads for the stairs at a dead run.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHRISTINA'S DOOR - DAY

In a wild hurry, Christina fits the key in the lock and pushes the door open.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Christina runs to the telephone, quickly pushes the buttons for a number she knows by heart.

CHRISTINA
(into the phone;
very excited)
Mother? I got a job!
(a beat)
Yes! It's a guest-star on 'Marcus Welby!'
(she listens)
I know, and I've only been here a few weeks!
(she listens)
Well, my auditions were pretty good, I think, but you helped me so much by calling all those people.
(a beat)
I'm so happy!
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)
(she listens)
Thank you. I'll need it. Listen, I have to call David -- I'll call you later tonight. And thank you.

She breaks the connection and rapidly dials another number.

CHRISTINA
(continuing)
David, guess what...

CUT TO:

INT. MARCUS WELBY SET - DAY

Christina finishes shooting a scene, the DIRECTOR yells "Cut," and then calls out "Terrific!" to Christina, who beams.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

A studio executive we haven't seen before, MILT JACOBS, is talking to Christina. He is uncomfortable.

JACOBS
We've all, uh, been hearing good things about your work.

CHRISTINA
Oh, thank you! I'm just sorry tomorrow's the last day.

JACOBS
(what's really on his mind)
Listen, your mother's been making calls.

CHRISTINA
(her face falls)
Calls? Who's she calling?

JACOBS
Everybody. Everybody.

CHRISTINA
What did she say?

CONTINUED:

JACOBS
It doesn't really make any difference -- you've done a fine job.

CHRISTINA
What did she say?

JACOBS
(sighing)
She said you called her to gloat over getting this part -- said you knew 'Marcus Welby' was the one show on television she wanted to do.

CHRISTINA
(small, tired voice)
Oh, God help me.

JACOBS
She said you laughed at her.

CHRISTINA
She must be drinking. More.

JACOBS
We all want you to know you're welcome to work here again. The calls aren't important -- just embarrassing. We thought you should know.

He pats her shoulder awkwardly and moves away.

CHRISTINA
(even smaller voice; to herself)
God help me.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Christina acts in another scene, but all the intensity, all the life has gone out of her performance.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Christina sits dry-eyed in a chair, making no attempt to answer the PHONE which RINGS and RINGS and RINGS.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Christina sits as we saw her before. Then there is a KNOCK on the DOOR and David's voice calls:

DAVID (O.S.)
Christina, are you in there? Let me in. Is something the matter? Let me in.

She moves to the door, and as soon as she sees DAvid, she bursts into tears.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

Christina's weeping has subsided, though she still wipes away an occasional tear. She and David sit on the floor, their backs against the sofa.

CHRISTINA
(furious, through the tears)
Why does she do it to me? We've gotten along so well the past half year or so.
(a beat)
Great suffering Christ in Heaven, why?

DAVID
You can't do anything about the way she acts, Christina. You can only be responsible for one life -- yours: I know that's a cliche, but it's a true one.
(a beat)
How do you feel about her? Do you still love her?

CHRISTINA
(always the good daughter; quick)
Yes.
(angry)
No!
(she sighs, weary)
Yes.

DAVID
Then that's what's important -- how you feel. You can't change her. If you love her, go on showing her that you do: write to her, call her. That's all you can do.

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA
(miserable)
Oh, what am I going to do with my God-damned life?

DAVID
Whatever you want to do -- that's what.
(a beat)
Do you still want to act?

CHRISTINA
I guess so. I don't know. I think I'm a good actress, but mother was right about one thing -- it's so hard.
(a beat)
Maybe I could go back to school.
(more tears)
Oh, I'm too old!

David laughs and pulls her to him.

DAVID
Sh-h. You're not too old, you're just right. Hush, now. Sh-h.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - NEXT DAY

Christina lies flat on her back on the floor, thinking, thinking, thinking.

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.C. - DAY

Christina is registering for classes. She feels a bit odd, surrounded by a multitude of eighteen year olds, but she unconsciously straightens her spine much the way we've seen Joan do it, and goes on with the registration.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Christina's hair is fixed differently, and she wears clothes we haven't seen before. David is drinking a glass of wine. Christina, surrounded by textbooks, is weeping again. She slams one book shut.

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA
(blows her nose)
Christ, but I'm sick of bawling.

DAVID
(gentle, but refusing to baby her)
Then stop.

CHRISTINA
But I'm older than one of my professors.

DAVID
Then don't go back tomorrow.

CHRISTINA
But I love it!

DAVID
Then do go back tomorrow.

CHRISTINA
What am I going to do?

DAVID
(he's said it a hundred times by now)
Whatever you want, whatever you want, whatever you want.

Christina jerks open the textbook and, teeth gritted, starts to read.

CUT TO:

INT. U.S.C. STUDENT CENTER - DAY

A few students read; others watch a television. Christina stands by a door, her eyes fixed on the set. On the screen is Joan, doing an afternoon talk show. She is reading from pages she holds, and though she has dignity, it is the false, too-careful dignity of someone who has had five or six drinks -- she is at least half drunk.

JOAN
(her voice slurred)
'... neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all...'
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOAN (CONT'D)
(long pause)
'air-ritdy' and disenchant-ment...'
(sighs, losing
her place)
... um, oh, yes... it is perennial.
as the grass...

Christina shakes her head sadly, and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY

Christina and David fly beautiful, multi-colored kites. Both are laughing.

CUT TO:

INT. FLORIST'S SHOP - DAY

A gray-haired WOMAN is waiting on Christina and David, who are ordering bouquets. A large sign behind the counter says, "SEND FLOWERS FOR MOTHER'S DAY."

CHRISTINA
... and mine goes to New York.

CLERK
And the name?

CHRISTINA
Joan Crawford.

The Clerk's head snaps up.

CLERK
Joan Crawford's your mother?

CHRISTINA
Yes.

CLERK
Oh, I always loved her.

CHRISTINA
(a pause; her three
words carry a world
of meaning)
So did I.

Too much – it kills the later part

DISSOLVE TO:

## INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY

And we return to the first scene of the movie. Christina and Ada stand as we saw them -- looking into Joan's casket.

save for 126

ADA

Your mother loved you, Christina.

CHRISTINA

I know.

CUT TO:

## EXT. PARKLAND MAUSOLEUM - UPSTATE NEW YORK - DAY

FROM A DISTANCE, we SEE a long line of limousines parked in front of the mausoleum; then Christina, David, Ada, Jake, and other mourners emerge from the mausoleum. Christina wipes her eyes repeatedly with a handkerchief.

CUT TO:

## INT. CHRISTINA AND DAVID'S N.Y.C. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Christina and David are dressed as in the previous scene. A LAWYER removes a large, legal-size document from his briefcase. On it is written "LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF JOAN CRAWFORD STEELE."

LAWYER

(matter-of-fact)

Christina, David, I thought it best to speak to you privately.

(a beat)

I didn't want to read this to you in front of the rest of the family.

The Lawyer clears his throat uncomfortably and flips through to the back of the will.

LAWYER

(continuing)

As executor of the estate, it is my duty to inform you of that portion of your mother's will which concerns you.

(reads from the will)

'It is my intention to make no provision for my daughter Christina or my son Christopher...

(a beat)

... for reasons which are well known to them.'

CONTINUED:

Christina's face is horrified, betrayed, bewildered.

DAVID
(moving to Christina)
Let's go home.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRISTINA AND DAVID'S HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

Dressed more casually than in the preceding scenes, Christina and David exit the elevator and start across the lobby. Ada, her face swollen, her eyes red, rushes up to them, taking Christina's arm.

ADA
I heard what happened. I can't explain it, but it doesn't...
(she searches)
... it just means...
(she can't find an explanation; she gives up)
No matter what, Christina, she loved you.

But Christina doesn't answer. She simply stands there calmly, looking at Ada, seeming at peack with herself.

There is no anger in her face, no bitterness. But neither is there an affirmation of Ada's words that Joan loved her. What is in Christina's face is a question -- a question that will possibly stay unanswered for the rest of her life.

As the CAMERA HOLDS ON Christina, the MUSIC we associate with Joan's happiest time -- the song "My Wonderful One" -- SEEPS UP on the soundtrack, and Christina's image BEGINS TO FADE. We HEAR the WORDS to the old romantic song:

'JUST YOU, ONLY YOU
IN THE SHADOWY TWILIGHT,
IN SILVERY MOONLIGHT,
THERE'S NONE
LIKE YOU, I ADORE YOU,
MY LIFE I LIVE FOR YOU --
MY WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL ONE.'

As Christina's IMAGE DISSOLVES, the MUSIC GROWS LOUDER, and a phtotograph of Joan emerges which COVERS THE ENTIRE SCREEN.

CONTINUED:

It is a glamour photograph taken in the late thirties, in the style of Hurrell; Joan's face is tilted upward, as if seeking the lights that accent her forehead, cheekbones, and eyes.

On the bottom right of the photograph, written in a large, sprawling hand, are the words Joan could probably say most honestly when she faced a camera: the words she has written are, "ALL MY LOVE TO YOU, JOAN CRAWFORD."

The MUSIC CONTINUES as the CAMERA HOLDS on the photograph.

FADE OUT.

THE END

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